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SEEKING CHRIST

WALKS WITH JESUS;

OR, DAYS OF THE

SON OF MAN.

BY

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PREFACE.

THIS book of Days in the life of the Son of Man begins with the divine Birth in Bethlehem, and it ends with the divine Ascension from Olivet. But it only takes here and there one of the more human and home-like scenes in the great biography, and tries to make it clear for modern eyes to see. No attempt has been made to write a connected life of Jesus, or to weave into consecutive order the chief events of the Gospel story. Very little exposition has been given of the meaning of the gracious words of Jesus, or of the mystery of his mighty works. We have only tried to put ourselves in the place of thoughtful men, who were looking for the Messiah in his day, and who wondered and wished to know whether Jesus of Nazareth were he that should come. With no theory to defend, no prejudices to gratify, further than the one desire to hear what truth will say from sacred lips, and what love will do with human hands, we have tried to fix a calm and steady gaze upon that wonderful Galilean teacher, as he was seen by the men of his time.

Then again taking with us the wider knowledge and the deeper experience which has grown into the life of men in our day, we have joined the great multitude that followed Jesus, and we have looked upon him and upon them, and listened to the words of both. And then we have compared our impression with the impressions of those who lived in the light of that day. So we have striven to bring the reality of the person and work of Jesus into the practical, every-day life of the world as it now is. We have only sat by the wayside and seen Jesus pass with the great multitude in his train, and we have tried to find out the mystery of the attraction with which he drew the world after him. We have gone down to the shore of the lake and

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listened while he spoke to the people on the land, and we have sought for the secret of his strange power over rude fishermen and extortionate publicans and reckless profligates of the town. We have climbed the hills of the morning, and found Jesus seated upon the ground, teaching the lessons of faith from the lilies of the field and the fowls of the air, and we have asked what charm there could be in his manner of speech to draw thousands into desert places at so early an hour, just to listen to his words and to look upon his face. We have sat by the wayside and looked on with wonder and awe, while Jesus passed, putting forth his power to heal the multitudes that thronged his path. Our hearts have been thrilled by the wild cry of joy with which the maimed leper looked upon fingerless hands and found them whole—the paralytic stretched out his restored arm and smote right and left with the vigor of youth—the blind lifted up his sightless eye-balls to the sun, and found the lost day.

One purpose runs through the whole composition of the book, and that is to set forth the perfectly human reality of the life led by the Son of God when he appeared on earth as the Son of Man, to show how completely he conformed to the daily habits and domestic conditions of the people with whom he lived, and thus also to show by inference how very near, in his divine work and teaching, Jesus still comes to the life of the world—how his whole mission tells the meaning of his prophetic name, Immanuel, God with us. So we have seen him making his home with families whose house was a mud cabin, whose clothing was the same, night and day, whose seat at table was the earth floor, whose furniture was the bare walls, whose bed was such as any one could easily take upon the arm and walk. We have seen him so closely confined in the crowded room night and day, so followed and intercepted and stared at in the narrow street, so beset with questioning and curiosity in the synagogue, that he must needs steal away to the desolate mountains by night to get a little rest and to calm and strengthen his spirit by communion with his great Father.

In all the circumstances of this crowded and wearied life, we see

Jesus moving about among men with a saddened and yet a serene and gracious majesty such as the princes and philosophers of the world could never assume. We see in this carpenter of Nazareth, this companion of fishermen, this fellow-lodger with the poor, the source of the best culture, the highest refinement and the happiest life which has been wrought out in the most advanced nations of our day. We see in him the source of the power which has kindled thought, quickened mind, enlarged knowledge, exalted reason, uplifted and glorified man wherever it has found him all over the earth.

Surely the last word has not yet been said concerning that mysterious life, which is still the best life of men and of the world. Many as are the books which have been written on this one theme, there is room in the ever-enlarging mind of the world for many more. Every earnest inquirer finds a deeper meaning in the words of Jesus; every age finds him leading the advance of all progress towards a better life; every enterprise of sound instruction and true humanity finds in him new resources for the redemption of men.

Among the many philosophies of our day, there is one which makes a comparison of religions, and assumes the high prerogative of selecting what is true and good in all, to make one which shall be the best for the most advanced and cultivated man of the future. It is kind enough to admit that man must needs have a religion of some sort. It is conceited enough to claim the right and ability to select from the beliefs of all time, all lands, the elements of the one creed which shall inspire worship and control conduct, in the great age when the fittest only shall survive, and philosophy shall be one with faith. The religion of the Bible need only have free investigation and a fair judgment, and it will be found to contain whatever is best in all other religions, and also, in great part, to have suggested or supplied whatever measure of truth may be found in them. The most cultivated man of the future has only to give up what he has drawn from other sources, and come back to God's own book to learn what to believe and how to live, and he will find a religion perfectly adapted to all ages of the world's advance, to all the capacities and necessities of the human race.

This universality of application in the gospel of Christ has never been so clearly demonstrated before the eyes of all the world as it is in our day. We have seen the word of Jesus carried to the Hottentot in his kraal, to the Figiian in his nakedness, to the Greenlander in his ice-cabin. And while we are living and looking on, that new-creating word makes a man out of a seeming brute, and raises up an equal with the angels from one whose whole life was a bondage to the lowest appetites and passions. The change is as evident and the work is as divine as that which was wrought by the word of Jesus when he said to the wretched and helpless paralytic, "Rise up and walk," and the man rose and went, with every limb of the body sound and every faculty of the mind free.

And we see this same word of Jesus, in lands where it is best known, quickening the most active mind, raising the standard of the highest culture, encouraging the keenest and the most critical inquiry, enlarging every department of knowledge, leading the advance of the mightiest nations, ever carrying man forward to a more complete mastery over the powers of nature, a more rational use of all his faculties and a more full attainment of a wise, well-ordered and perfect life. So we see this word of Christ, wherever it goes, raising up a new and mighty manhood, bringing forth new resources from the exhaustless treasure-house of nature, and putting them into the hands of the followers of Christ, as fast as they become strong enough in faith, and complete enough in consecration, to be entrusted with greater power and deeper knowledge.

When the word of Christ is fully received, it will restore man to his lost lordship over nature, and make all the elements of the material world his servants to do his bidding and to enrich his life. In two thousand years, under the teaching of Christ, the world has recovered much of that lost power, but there is much more to gain. Undoubtedly those who live with Christ and keep his word of truth on the earth two thousand years hence, will do works, which, if done by men in our day, would seem to us as wonderful and mighty as the miracles of Jesus seemed to the men of his time.

We go back to the gospel age and follow the steps of Jesus in his earthly ministry, not to wish we had lived then, but to quicken our faith in the great fact that ours too are Days of the Son of Man, and that never was Christ more evidently in the world than now. We do the best we can to put ourselves in the place of the men who stood by and saw Jesus touch the eyes of the blind and give them sight, or command the winds and make them hush, or stop the bier and call the dead to life. We restore the ruined cities and we revive the natural features of the landscape around the lake. We go into the private house and the public synagogue, the busy market and the crowded street, that we may see how men lived and worked and slept in Capernaum—how plain and common and homely was their every-day life, when the Son of God taught in their streets, sailed in their boats, walked in their paths, slept in their rooms. And we do all this again to confirm our faith in the great fact that the word of Jesus is mightier now in a thousand cities than it was then in Capernaum. The Master himself comes as near in spirit to our every-day life, as he came in visible person to the fishermen of Galilee or the family at Bethany.

This book is put forth in the hope that it may help some reader to see a more human and home-like reality in the life which Jesus lived among men in the days of his earthly ministry, and also to see a more vivid and convincing reality in the mighty work which Jesus is doing in our day before all the nations. This book is written in the hope that it may help some reader to take the name of Jesus with him more constantly into all the common duties of life, and to have a larger share in the fulfilment of the great commission to publish the word of Jesus to the ends of the earth.

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Bethlehem and its Story.

And thou, Bethlehem, in the land of Juda, art not the least among the princes of Juda, for out of thee shall come a governor that shall rule my people Israel.—MATT. ii. 6.

THE SHEPHERDS' FIELD AT BETHLEHEM.

I.

BETHLEHEM AND ITS STORY.

THE little strip of land, which lies between the river Jordan and the Mediterranean Sea, is hallowed in the faith and embalmed in the affections of millions who never saw the morning break on its mountains, or the sea whiten on its shore. Through the long line of centuries it has received double consecration from the blood of saints and the battle of heroes. In familiar speech and in sacred song, its hills and valleys, its cities and villages stand for all that is most beautiful of earth, and all that is most blessed in heaven. But the one name which makes Palestine the Holy Land for all people and for all time is JESUS.

We go to Bethlehem, travelling the road trodden by pilgrims for two thousand years. We enter the western gate and make our way along its one narrow and noisy street, till we come to the eastern slope where the sacred buildings stand. We go down to the Shepherds' Fields, and lift up our eyes to survey the scene with which we are surrounded. We see nothing but naked hills, a few terraced slopes, and here and there a patch of green earth or a grove of olives and figs in the bed of the valley. And yet we feel that every step we take is upon holy ground, because from those fields went

forth the song of peace which still encircles the globe, and which is destined to become the song of all nations. In the rude khan, on that Bethlehem hill, was born a Saviour who is Lord of earth and heaven.

We climb the rocky steep which rises over Nazareth on the west. We ascend the white Mohammedan tomb which crowns the hill, and we look down upon the white village and the green valley which we have left beneath us, and we see little in the landscape to charm the eye or inspire the mind, until we consider that that obscure town, hidden away from the march of armies and the merchandise of nations, was for thirty years the home of Jesus. Then all about us is transfigured and glorified, and it seems but a little way from the top of the hill, on which we stand, to the highest heaven. Then the spring at the head of the village seems as if it were one of the living fountains to which the Lord shall lead his ransomed flock. Then the rounded dome of Tabor on the east becomes a throne great and high for the Ancient of days, and its green oaks are overshadowed with the bright cloud out of which came the voice saying, This is my beloved Son! Then the rude village of Nain, hanging on the northern slope of Little Hermon in sight, where Jesus raised the young man and restored him to his mother, becomes a symbol and a promise of the resurrection and the endless life. Then the Mediterranean on the west glows like the sea of glass on which the blessed walk and sing to the harps of God. Then we count it a happy day in our lives when, after

many thousand miles of travel by sea and land, we look at last upon the paths where Jesus walked, we see the homes where Jesus dwelt with men.

As we walk along the northern shore of the Sea of Galilee, we find, in a thicket of thistles and thorns, the base of a column and a few blocks of carved stone. We look around and we see nothing but the bare hills reflected in the bright water, and the brown earth turned by the rude ploughs of peasants whose homes are nowhere seen. But we cease to wonder what can draw intelligent and devout pilgrims from the ends of the earth to that lonely lake when we consider that we are standing upon the site of ancient Capernaum. The blocks of marble beneath our feet, with pomegranates carved along the face, once rested on the walls of the synagogue in which Jesus restored life to the withered hand and spoke the word of life to wondering crowds of men.

We go up the stony path to the top of Olivet and look down upon Jerusalem. The space within the walls is so small as scarcely to deserve the name of a city, and it never could have been much larger in the days of its ancient glory. We turn and look eastward, the way of the wilderness, and the road to Bethany is only a path, such as horses make by frequent passing over steep and stony ground. The whole region round about is such as no one would go far to see, were not the mount and the valley, the village and the city, hallowed by the closing scenes in the earthly life of Jesus.

And so the whole land which we have learned to call holy, and to which pilgrims are drawn from the ends of the earth, derives its chief attraction from a history which was complete and crowned with glory in the death of Jesus on the cross.

The three places of most sacred and surpassing interest in the earthly life of Jesus, are Bethlehem, Nazareth, Jerusalem. Neither of them is named as his own city. In neither of them did he speak most of his gracious words or do most of his mighty works. And yet Bethlehem leads the morning song of the new creation. Jesus bears the name of Nazareth to the cross of earth and the crown of heaven. Jerusalem is the symbol of the holy city whose gates are of pearl and whose foundations are of precious stones.

In all our attempts to follow the steps of Jesus, in all our studies of his divine character and mighty work, we are drawn with peculiar interest to the lowly manger where the Holy Child was laid, to the obscure village where the Son of the carpenter lived, to the sacred city where the immortal Redeemer died. Over Bethlehem the star of hope dawned upon a darkened and despairing world. At Nazareth the hand that upholds the stars was put forth to human work, and the divine life dwelt in the habitations of men. On Calvary the conflict with death and the powers of darkness was complete, and the cross of shame was changed to the sceptre of power and the throne of glory.

The gentle heavens shed sweet influences, and the

angel host sung songs of peace and joy over the divine birth in Bethlehem. The wondering heavens looked down in silence, and the waiting angels ceased their singing, while the divine life lived unrecognized side by side with peasants and carpenters for thirty years among the hills of Nazareth. The witnessing heavens put on sackcloth of astonishment and sorrow, and the convulsed earth was rent in agony when the mighty Victim of Calvary cried in darkness and desolation of soul as if smitten and forsaken of God.

To Bethlehem, the first of these holy places in Palestine, our attention is drawn by the opening scene in the Saviour's earthly life. We may well desire to learn all we can of the sacred spot which God had chosen to signalize through all coming ages by the incarnation of his divine and eternal Son. We would not cherish undue reverence for the ground on which Jesus walked, or the homes where he rested when weary with toil. If the veritable cross on which the Saviour died were kept in some sacred shrine unto this day, we would not worship the dead wood in forgetfulness of him who is alive and who lives forevermore. But we would avail ourselves of every incident and every association which will help us grasp the great fact that the eternal Word was made flesh and dwelt with men, and men saw his face as one sees the face of a friend full of grace and truth.

We make pilgrimages to the birthplace of patriots and heroes. We build monuments to the mighty dead. We trace out the source and the march of great revolu-

tions. We gaze with inspired enthusiasm upon the field where nations met in the shock of arms. We stand in silence and deep thought by the grave where rest the ashes of the great and good of all time.

With a more profound and reverent interest should we study the place, the time, and the circumstances of the greatest event in the world's history: the coming of the Son of God to accomplish the world's redemption. If we go far to see the homes of great warriors, and make pictures of the scenes on which they looked in early life, with a more thoughtful mind and reverent spirit should we look on the place where the Prince of peace was born.

It is by the awful and infinite mystery of the divine incarnation that the deep chasm between earth and heaven is bridged over, and a way is cast up for angels to pass to and fro on messages of love. The birth of the Holy Child in Bethlehem teaches better than ten thousand tongues could tell that the Highest dwells in the habitations of men: this earth is one apartment of our Father's house, and the true life for us is to live as sons and daughters of the Lord Almighty. This first and greatest article of our most Christian faith is not written on tablets of stone, and enforced by the sanctions of fiery law. In God's way of teaching this great truth is set to music in the song of the angels, it is illumined in the face of the divine Child, it is confirmed and consecrated by the prayer of the cross.

When we consider the frailty of this mortal state, the weakness that burdens our loftiest effort, the dimness

that clouds our clearest vision, the infirmity that paralyzes our noblest purpose, the impurity that poisons the life blood of our hearts, it seems almost too much to believe that the everlasting God would take on himself our flesh and bear the weight of our weakness in sorrow and suffering to the cross. And yet upon this one greatest truth of the gospel story hangs our best hope for ourselves and the world. Accept this one fact and all else is plain. There is no revelation of the divine mercy too great for us to receive when once we recognize in the Babe of Bethlehem the mighty One whose goings forth have been from of old, even from everlasting.

Guided by such information as we can gather from all sources, let us now go even unto Bethlehem and see the place where the King of glory appeared in the form of a servant, and was found as a little child, in the likeness of mortal men, eighteen hundred years ago. Let us combine the facts of history with the results of repeated observation, and let "imagination body forth the forms of things unknown," that we may thus give life and reality to the simple picture set before us in the gospel story.

The town of Bethlehem lies five miles to the south of Jerusalem, a little to the east of the direct road to Hebron. The Syrian Mountains on the north rise ten thousand feet above the sea, and they embrace three ranges, Hermon and the two Lebanons. With occasional interruptions and a gradual depression, they extend southward to the Arabian desert. United in one central ridge, the whole mass lies upon the face of Pales-

tine like some vast centipede, with rocky arms of limestone hills extending east and west. Between the long, gray ridges of a hundred stony hills, narrow valleys and winding glens, called wadies, run down to the Jordan and the Dead Sea on the one side, and to the plain of Sharon and to Carmel on the other. On one of these ridges, extending only a mile eastward from the main chain, stands Bethlehem. Like Jerusalem, it is separated from the neighboring hills on every side save one by deep valleys. Unlike Jerusalem, it was never fortified with lofty towers and strong walls.

The view from the housetops of the town takes in some of the most striking features of the Holy Land. To the southeast rises a cone-shaped hill, with the top cut down and with sides so even and regular as to suggest the thought that it may have been built up by the hand of man. Tradition makes it the ancient beacon, Beth-haccerem, on which the sign of fire was lifted up for the gathering of the tribes when the trumpet of war was blown in Tekoa, and the herdsmen of the mountains left their flocks to repel the coming foe. The wise woman who found a way of saying to David what the stern warrior Joab durst not say, the mighty men who served as body-guard to the king, the shepherd prophet who cried against the wickedness of Bethel in the days of Jeroboam, had their home in this hill-town, in sight of Bethlehem on the south. Those fearless, stout-hearted men received the first and deepest impress of character from the awful silence and the more awful

sounds, the dark shadows and the fierce sunlight, the wild ravines and the haunted caverns of the region over which the eye sweeps in looking from Bethlehem and Beth-haccerem toward Tekoa.

Southwest, at such distance as a shepherd-boy could run in half the time from morning to mid-day, is the valley of Elah and the field of Ephesdammim, where young David slew the giant chieftain of Gath. The heights on which the armies of Israel and Philistia were encamped still stand facing each other, mountain against mountain. The oaks are still growing in the bed of the valley, as they were when the mail-clad champion defied the armies of the living God, and the branches of the trees trembled with the tramp of hosts rushing to battle. A burnished shield, lifted up as a signal against the sun of the morning by those who looked down from the hill-tops when the great warrior fell, could be seen by old Jesse from his own roof in Bethlehem.

Northeast, half way to Jerusalem, and cutting off the view of the Holy City, is a saddle-shaped ridge bearing the name of Elijah. There, a late tradition says, the great and terrible prophet sank down at noonday upon a rock, weary, hungry, and ready to die, when he fled for his life from Jezebel and sought to hide himself from the furious queen in the solitude of Horeb. Standing on that ridge the eye takes in at once the birth and burial-place of David and of David's greater Son. Far away in the east are seen the blue mountains of Moab, from which Moses took his last look of earth.

Travelling southward from Jerusalem, we get our first view of Bethlehem on this ridge, to which modern usage gives the name of Elijah. Passing on, we leave the tomb of Rachel to the right, and in ten minutes more we bend around the head of a deep valley that drops down on the left, and then reach the western gate of the town by the same ascent up which Joseph and Mary toiled, weary and belated, on that memorable night which has been made an era for all subsequent ages, and the source of new hopes and a new history for all mankind.

Eighteen centuries have wrought but little change upon the stone-built town and the strife-loving people. The arched gateway of the wall stands where the same, or something like it, stood in the days of David. The narrow, broken, uneven pathway, which makes the main street, is still, as it was in old time, difficult to travel by day and dangerous by night. The gray, tomb-like stone houses are scattered for a mile's length along the ridge of the hill, and sometimes they stand so near each other as to touch overhead and cover the traveller with their projecting balconies. The blank, windowless wall makes the front seem like the back side of the house. Narrow lanes and alleys, with arched entrances, looking like the gateways of prisons, run off right and left from the main street, and open passages to still gloomier stone cabins and caves in the rock. Goats and donkeys share these cheerless homes with their masters. All are substantially the same now that they were on that memor-

able night when the weary strangers from Nazareth groped their way through the whole length of the dark, crooked, and stony street to the khan at the eastern extremity, there at last to find lodging with the beasts of the stall.

Standing upon the roof of the Armenian monastery at Bethlehem, or upon the flattened dome of one of its limestone houses, we look down upon the same landscape that was seen by Mary and Joseph, David and Samuel, Ruth and Naomi, Rachel and Jacob. On the north, east and south sides of the ridge, on which the town is built, the cultivated slopes descend to the plain and the bed of the valleys in terraces with as much regularity as the galleries of an amphitheatre. Early in the spring the hillsides look gray and naked, like ash heaps, and the black vines lie upon the bare ground, like dead wood overthrown by the storm. Later in the season, when new shoots and fresh leaves have been brought forth by the sun, the whole hill seems like a hanging garden lifted up to catch the light. The wide-branching fig mingles its dark green foliage with the silvery olive, and the two supply the light and shade of a living picture, which the eye never wearies with beholding. The upright walls of the terraces are wreathed in vines, and the trees that rise from ledge to ledge, one above another, look as if they had been set there for decoration more than for use.

The soft, porous limestone, worn by time and weather, crumbles to fine brown powder, which needs but little

mould to make the most stimulating soil. The grapes that grow about the hill of Bethlehem are as rich and delicate in flavor as those that ripen on the lava beds of Vesuvius. The figs, and almonds, and apricots, and pomegranates, and olives from the gardens in the hollows under the hill, are sought after in the markets of Jerusalem, and are bought for the best. Below the town, on the east, there is ample space for fields of wheat and barley. And there, in the time of harvest, reapers may be seen followed by gleaners, just as Ruth gleaned after the young men of Boaz, in the same fields three thousand years ago.

The green terraces and the little narrow valleys of cultivated ground about Bethlehem, are made to appear more beautiful to the eye by contrast with the wilderness of Judah, which lies in full sight on the east. The view in that direction is bounded by hills of white limestone, thrown confusedly together, like waves when the winds suddenly change, and seas cross each other in wild discord. The hills are cloven by narrow, waterless ravines, and the mouths of many caverns open upon their steep sides, and farther away the glens contract into wild, deep gorges, or slope off with a rapid descent to the dismal shores of the Dead Sea. Not a solitary tree nor a spot of green earth can be seen along the whole outline of scorched and blasted hills and robber-haunted glens, which bound the view toward the wilderness of Judah and the mountains of Moab. Standing upon the cone of Beth-haccerem and looking eastward,

with the green hill of Bethlehem and the green valley of Urtas and Edom behind, and the waste places of the wilderness before, one seems to have landed upon an island of green in an ocean of desolation.

The birth of Jesus is the one great event which gives sacredness and importance to this little town, perched upon a stony ridge and pushed aside like Nazareth from the march of armies and the merchandise of nations. And yet Bethlehem itself had a history before the world's Redeemer took refuge in its humble stall, and the peace-song of the world was sung by angel hosts on the plain under the hill. Before the Hebrews were a people, before Jerusalem had its name, Jacob came back from his lonely exile in Padan-Aram, journeying towards Hebron. The train of his servants, and oxen, and camels, and sheep, and goats was a great host, covering the hills and sweeping through the valleys, like the overflow of waters. The whole country resounded with the bleating of flocks and the cries of shepherds and herdmen, as they came leisurely along the rough and winding pathways from the north. The multitude was so great that when Jacob had taken five hundred and fifty from his flock, as a present to his brother Esau, he seemed to have as many as before.

When within a mile of Bethlehem, and just about to bend round the head of the valley that drops down on the north side of the hill, Rachel, the younger and the most beloved of the wives of the patriarch, was taken with the pangs of travail. They stopped the train and

made a bed for her as best they could by the roadside. She had hard labor, and as she lay in agony, and her soul was departing, she named her new-born child Benoni—son of my sorrow. But Jacob, mingling gladness for the gift of a son with grief for the loss of a wife, called the child Benjamin—son of the right hand, or son of days, thereby indicating his hope that new strength and life had come to him in his old age. And from that child, born by the roadside and receiving the gift of his own life at the cost of death to another, descended the tribe of fierce and terrible left-handed slingers and archers, whose home was on the rocky hill-tops and in the wild glens and gorges north of Jerusalem.

Jacob paused in his journey long enough to set a pillar upon the grave of his wife. And more than forty years afterward, when he was old, and blind, and dying, he commemorated in his last words the place and the bitter agony which took from him his beloved Rachel, and gave him Benjamin, the darling of the father and of the whole family, by the roadside in sight of the hill of Bethlehem.

The monument which Jacob reared over Rachel's grave, thirty-six hundred years ago, has its representative to-day in the white Mohammedan tomb which marks the spot, and which still bears the name of Benjamin's mother. The poetical spirit of ancient prophesy makes the sorrow for the slaughter of Bethlehem's children so great that a voice of lamentation was heard ten miles off, in Ramah, as if it came out of Rachel's tomb

It was like the mourning of a mother for children whose life has been made dear to her by the death-pangs of their birth. When I visited Bethlehem the last time, there was weeping and great lamentation at the same spot. I met many women coming out of the gate of the city chanting the dirge of sorrow as they walked, and going out to the grave of Rachel that they might weep there with wild, piercing voices that seemed more like screaming than singing; they kept uttering the same words: "She has left her dear home to return no more."

It would seem that the birth of Benjamin, the son of sorrow, was appointed by all-ruling Providence at that place in the midst of a household journey, and that it was recorded by the pen of inspiration, and the record was kept and read for seventeen hundred years to shadow forth a greater birth, and a more mysterious agony, when the Son of God should become a man of sorrows, and take on himself the sins and afflictions of a lost world. The son of sorrow in the old time became the head of a tribe of warriors whose home was in the passes of the mountains, and whose standard in the day of battle was ever on the high places of the field. The Man of Sorrows in later time became the head of a mightier host whose home is in every land, whose warfare is for life, and whose conflicts and victories are for the peace of earth and the crown of heaven.

Four hundred years after the death of Rachel, in the time of the early harvest, when the air was glimmering

with heat on the hills, and the grain was turning white and brown in the fields, two lonely women, mother and daughter-in-law, appeared, hungry and homeless, and afflicted, in the stony street of Bethlehem. They had come all the way from beyond the Dead Sea on the east, across the mouth of the Jordan and the plain of Jericho, up through the lonely paths of the wilderness, and the wild glens among the mountains of Judah, and they passed, wondering and silent, along the narrow street, like strangers from a far country. Their friendless condition excited the commiseration of the whole town. But the mother's heart was so deeply wrung with the remembrance of better days, and of the threefold desolation which had come upon her house, that the offers of sympathy at first only served to open her wounds afresh. When the curious villagers asked in kindness who she was, she said they might call her anything that meant bitterness and misery, for the Almighty had dealt very bitterly with her.

The daughter-in-law had had many sorrows of her own to bear; but her heart was younger and her spirit was not yet crushed. She was eager to do something to save herself and her dear and despondent old mother from sinking and repining under the miseries that had come upon them; she even begged to be permitted to go down into the barley-fields below the town and glean after the reapers. It is hard for the stoutest heart to hold out against hunger, and so the unhappy mother let the daughter go, staying behind herself to brood

over the bitterness of her lot in some windowless stone cabin of the town. The daughter went with a light heart to her humble toil, stooping through the hot stubble all day, gathering the bearded heads of barley from among thistles and thorns with her bare hands, at night or in the hot noonday's rest sitting down beside the field to beat out the kernels of dry grain with a stick, and carrying home a few handfuls to pound with a stone and bake in the ashes, and so keep herself and her poor old mother alive.

And it was because that affectionate daughter performed such lowly work with the grace of cheerfulness and the charm of modest virtue, in a land where she was a stranger, that she drew the attention and touched the heart of the lord of the field, and she was taken by him, in open and honorable marriage, to his own house. Hence the name of Ruth is the symbol of fidelity and affection wherever the Bible is read. Hence she stands in sacred history as the mother of the greatest and best of the Hebrew kings, and the Son of God himself was descended, in his humanity, from a homeless exile who saved herself and her mother from starving, by gleaning barley all day in the hot field beneath the hill of Bethlehem.

Two hundred and fifty years after Ruth became the wife of Boaz, there was a day when an old man, with a white beard and a mournful look, came up the hill of Bethlehem leaning on his prophet's staff. The comers and goers about the gate paused and looked

after him with silent awe as he passed in and called for the elders of the town. They came into his presence trembling and pale with terror, for they knew that the word of the Lord was the burden of the old man's message wherever he went. When he left his mountain home in Ramah, and walked through the land, the people were afraid that he had come to call their sins to remembrance. But he soon quieted the fears of the elders of Bethlehem by telling them that he had come to sacrifice unto the Lord, and that his message to them was peace.

There was an old man in the village who had eight sons, seven of them full grown, giants in strength and stature, mighty men of valor, feared and honored as foremost among the fighting men of Bethlehem. Between them an their younger brother there was an interval of many years. He was the child of old age, named the Darling by the fond father; more youthful in appearance than in years, of fair complexion and beautiful features and goodly to look upon. The rude and boisterous brothers despised the boy for his youth and beauty, and they treated him as if he were a slave or a girl. They set him to watch sheep and to follow the goats, as they climbed the ridges and wandered through the narrow valleys on the east of the town.

But the beautiful and fair-haired boy made good use of his shepherd life in learning lessons suited to the people and the time. He traced out all the intricate network of glens and ridges in the wild country

where he led his flocks in search of pasturage eastward from Bethlehem, and southward to the cave of Adullam and the springs of Engedi. He learned to sleep on the bare ground, and to spring to his feet, wide-awake like a young leopard, at the least cry of alarm. He could make his breakfast of barley-bread or a handful of parched corn and a couple of figs, drink with the goats from the brook and let the day pass without dining, and night come with no better bed for the young shepherd than for his sheep. So he became indifferent to all extremes of temperature and all forms of danger. He could scale the giddy crag as easily as the sailor climbs the mast, and he could walk on the edge of the cliff where the wild goats were afraid to seek their food. He would attack the lion and the bear single-handed, and deliver the lambs of his flock from the fiercest of the beasts of prey. The roving Arab could not surprise him in the field or the fold, and the daring robber from the desert learned to avoid an encounter with such a keeper.

He became familiar with mountains, and winds, and clouds, with pathless solitudes, and sounding storms, and starry nights. He taught his fingers to play upon the harp, and he made the waste places of the wilderness vocal with psalms of praise. He wove the glories of the sunset, and the fires of the firmament, and the shadows of the forest, and the lightnings of the tempest, and the voices of the deep into songs that shall be sung through all coming time.

And now when Samuel the prophet called Jesse's sons to pass before him, that he might anoint the noblest king over Israel, the seven stalwart men were rejected, and this forgotten boy David was sent for to come in from the sheep-walks in the wilderness, and on him the consecrating oil was poured in the name of the Lord and in the midst of his brethren. And so when the divine Son of David was born in Bethlehem, a thousand years after Samuel's visit terrified the elders of the town, the Messiah came in the line of descent from one who kept sheep on the neighboring hills, and wandered a fugitive and an outlaw among the caves and glens of the wilderness beyond. And David himself, the greatest and best of all the Hebrew kings, need only go back three generations to find his mother in the barley field gleaning after the reapers in sight of his native town.

When David in his old age was driven from his throne and from Jerusalem by the unnatural rebellion of his son Absalom, he took refuge among the mountains of Gilead on the east of the Jordan. An old chief among the mountain tribes, Barzillai by name, greatly befriended the fugitive king and his followers by bringing them beds, and basins, and earthen vessels, and wheat, and barley, and flour, and parched corn. When Absalom was slain, and David returned to Jerusalem, he took with him Chimham the son of old Barzillai, and ever afterwards treated him as one of the princes and favorites of the royal household. At a

later day, we find Chimham in possession of a house at Bethlehem which would seem to have been the gift of the king, and to have been the home of the family for three generations. And when David was dying, in his last words he charged Solomon his son and successor to show kindness to the son of Barzillai, and to ensure to him the possession of the home in Bethlehem, where Ruth found a home and the shepherd king was born.

Four hundred and thirty years afterwards, in the days of Jeremiah the prophet, when Jerusalem was in ruins and the tribes of Israel had been carried captive to Babylon, the strong, stone-built house, given by King David to the son of his benefactor, was still standing in Bethlehem, and it was still called the house of Chimham. It had then become the khan or public house of the village. Jeremiah himself took refuge within its walls, when his friend and protector, Gedaliah, the deputy governor appointed by the king of Babylon, had been treacherously slain at Mizpeh, the watch-tower, standing in sight of Bethlehem, a few miles north of Jerusalem.

At that time also a great company of fugitives, fearing the wrath of Nebuchadnezzar for the murder of his governor, came down from Mizpeh, and filled the whole house of Chimham and encamped upon the slopes of the hill and in the open spaces of the town. Jeremiah, speaking by the word of the Lord, warned them to go back to their homes and fear nothing. But they disobeyed, and passed on in the other direction into Egypt, taking the prophet himself with them, and there they all

died. Their brief sojourn at Bethlehem served to identify the house of Chimham with the public khan or inn of the town, to revive the memories of David and of Ruth, and to help us find a fitting place for the one greatest and most mysterious birth of all time.

So the story of Bethlehem runs through seventeen hundred years of the Old Testament history like a rivulet in the desert, sometimes on the surface and shining in the sun, and then again for a long distance sinking into the earth, as if it were lost altogether, yet always moving on toward the great sea, and revealing its course in the waste by life and verdure where the stream itself cannot be seen. So the wise purpose of divine Providence runs through all the waste and conflict of human history, ever bringing good out of evil as it goes, and never losing sight of the one goal of infinite good in the end.

The Divine Birth in Bethlehem.

Unto you is born in the city of David a Saviour, which is Christ the Lord.—LUKE ii. 11.

II.

THE DIVINE BIRTH IN BETHLEHEM.

FIVE hundred and eighty years after the prophet Jeremiah left Bethlehem and went down into Egypt to spend the remainder of his days in the dark land lamenting for his beloved Zion, two weary travellers from the hills of Nazareth came to the city of David at a late hour of the night. Their journey had been hard and long, and one of the two was not in a condition to bear the fatigue of travelling, even if the road were less steep and stony than they had to pursue and the conveyance better than they could command. Entering at the western gate, they passed on through the whole length of the straggling street to the eastern extremity of the town, in search of rest and shelter, being greatly in need of both.

On the brow of the hill, overlooking the wheat fields and the pasture grounds on the east, was the ancient historic lodging-place for pilgrims, the khan or caravansera, which was once the home where Ruth lived and David was born, and where Jeremiah received the word of the Lord. The travellers came unattended, and everything in their appearance indicated that they belonged to the class of the poor and the lowly. Yet by descent they were of the royal house and lineage of David,

the greatest of the kings of Israel, and they had come in accordance with Roman law to be enrolled on the tax list in the town of their great ancestor. The strangers in Bethlehem at the time were so many that neither private houses nor the old historic khan could receive all that came. Still, the weary travellers from the north could not think of going anywhere else for lodging than to the house which had been identified with the history of their family for a thousand years. They therefore made their way as best they could in the darkness along the narrow, stony street, from the western gate to the great stone lodging-house on the brow of the eastern hill.

But these benighted wayfarers found that their royal lineage could avail them little in securing shelter in the house that still bore the name of the Psalmist King. There was no room for them even in the great khan, which had been sufficient to receive the multitude of fugitives from Mizpeh in the days of Jeremiah. When these two belated travellers entered the broad open gateway they found the whole space within the walls crowded with men, women and children; horses, asses and camels, sleeping promiscuously together upon the bare ground or the stone floor. Some were crouched under coarse mats, some were wrapped in goat's-hair cloaks, some had dropped down among the kneeling camels, some had no shelter from the chilly night air save the thin clothing of the day. The high, doorless, windowless, unfurnished arcades, or sleeping compartments

in the walls, and the raised flooring upon which the arches opened, were all full. There was a wide terrace or roof over the arches which afforded a sleeping place in summer. But it was hardly a fit place even for eastern travellers in the chill December night. Between the two great walls of the khan there were arched vaults like the casemates of a fort. They ran back into the hillside, and were enlarged by connection with cavernous openings in the native rock. They were used only for the shelter of servants, muleteers and cattle in bad weather. The sides were fitted up with cribs built into the walls, and shaped like kneading troughs for the cattle.

In such a dismal, doorless, stony cell were the late travellers from Nazareth obliged to seek shelter outside of the inner court of the caravansera on their arrival at Bethlehem. In such a cheerless stall for cattle was the Redeemer of the world born. In the stone-built crib, where straw and barley were fed to beasts, the Son of God found his first earthly bed.

The hours move slowly on, freighted with immortal destinies, even as God's great work ever moves from everlasting to everlasting. It is now the noon of night, and the greatest event of time has taken place since the sun set, and men know it not. Tracing back the course of the orbs of heaven to the beginning of the earth's great new year, as commonly reckoned, we find that the moon of the month had passed its full, and was beginning to wane. It was dark when the late travellers came to the

gate of the khan, and they were obliged to feel their way into their cave-like lodging place, with little help from lantern or guide. But now the moon is three hours above the mountains of Moab. The haze of noonday has gone from the air, and the bare, brown ridges of the wilderness stand out in clear outline against the eastern sky.

It is the noon of night on the Sea of Death that lies low between the parted hills. Its leaden waves sleep as if no breath of air had ever stirred a ripple on its surface. The sea sleeps in its rocky bed, as the dead sleep in the shroud when the sun shines on the placid face for the last time. That awful image of death, lying in its open grave a thousand feet deep beneath the moon, gives no sign that the Prince of life has come to take from death its sting and from the grave its victory.

It is the noon of night on the wild pathways of the wilderness where shepherds sleep and wake by turns, and watch-dogs howl from hill to hill, and the wolf lies in wait for some straggler from the fold. The simple guardians of the flock have not heard of the coming of the great Shepherd, who will go through all the waste places of the earth seeking the lost and bringing them home. They look up to the slow-moving heavens and wait for the day without any thought that the Leader of the starry host has appeared in Bethlehem as a little child.

It is the noon of night in the Holy City. Herod sleeps and starts screaming from feverish dreams of assassins lurking in his bed-chamber. He seems to see the forms

of his murdered children coming back from the dead to shake their gory locks at him. He knows nothing as yet of the Child King, whose bed is with the beasts of the stall, and whose throne shall be exalted above all the thrones of earth. The moonlight falls on Bethany and Olivet, and Gethsemane and Calvary, and the watcher on the temple wall looks upon the landscape with a feeling of worship, as if it had been let down from God out of heaven. But he knows nothing of the new-born Child in the manger, whose name shall give deeper consecration to all those places about the Holy City than they have received from a thousand years of sacred story.

The noon of night moves on in its westward march. Soon it will look down upon the enchanted vale of Egypt, where the Pharaohs sleep amid groves of palm. It will call forth the procession of bright-robed priests, and the chant of sweet singers to the moon-goddess in the great temple of Diana at Ephesus. It will light up the golden shield of Minerva, and give the expression of life to the marble statues of the Parthenon, and clothe all the hills and vales and groves about Athens with strange beauty. It will pass on over imperial Rome, and its sacred silence will be broken by the sound of revelry in palaces and the cry of captives in prisons. But nowhere in the great seats of the world's power, or in the sacred shrines of the world's worship, will there be one, prince or priest, peasant or philosopher, to suspect that the greatest hour in the world's history is passing, the most significant event in all time is written down in the book of God for that night.

But see, on the pasture-grounds below Bethlehem, the noon of night is changed to a splendor that surpasses the noon of day. The glory of the Lord, that led the tribes in the desert, the awful brightness, before which the priests in the Temple of Jerusalem could not stand to minister, shines round about the shepherds who are keeping the night-watches with their flocks in the field. They are all awake, and yet they seem like men suddenly startled from slumber. They cannot gaze upon the brightness of the glory which has appeared unto them, and they are exceedingly afraid. Suddenly the strange light grows into a form as of a man, with more than human gentleness and majesty in his look. He seems to stand upon the earth, and yet he moves with the ethereal grace and lightness of beings that never bore the burden of flesh, never knew the weariness of work. He speaks, and his voice mingles the majesty of command with the gentleness of a mother in soothing her timid child to sleep.—"Fear not ye, for behold I bring you good tidings of great joy which shall be unto all people. For unto you is born this day, in the city of David, a Saviour which is Christ the Lord."

And the joy is too great for a single messenger to bring from heaven to earth. For, suddenly, the whole plain seems to have become camping-ground for the angel host. Now that earth is silent, and the great capitals of the nations know not of the coming of their King, the armies of heaven must proclaim the great event. They break forth, "loud as from numbers with-

out number, sweet as from blest voices uttering joy," and they take up the song which the millions of mankind shall yet learn to sing—"Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good will to men."

And when the angels cease their singing, and they are gone to carry the tidings of the great advent through the heaven of heavens, the wondering shepherds say, "Let us go and see this thing which has come to pass in Bethlehem, and which the Lord, by the ministration of angels, has made known to us." So they leave their flocks in the fold, they follow the pathways of the fields in the white moonlight, they climb up the hillside among terraced gardens and evergreen olives, and they come to the stable of the inn and find, as the angel had said, "the Babe lying in a manger."

Thenceforth the house of David, on the brow of that hill, is consecrated in all Christian memories forevermore. Fruitful, vine-clad Bethlehem, which signifies "the house of bread," becomes the representative of that living Bread which came down from heaven, of which if a man eat he shall never die. Contentious, war-loving Bethlehem sends forth a song of peace which shall be sung in all the languages of men, and in all the ages of time. Royal, king-nursing Bethlehem, becomes the birthplace of a Prince whose glory shall fill the earth, and whose dominion shall endure throughout all generations. Proud, beautiful Bethlehem, nestled among hills and smiling on the desert, sends forth a message of mercy to comfort all that mourn, to lift up all that are

cast down, and to gladden all the waste places of the earth.

The story of Bethlehem loses nothing of its meaning or its power with the progress of time. It never meant so much in the minds of thinking men as it does now, and it will hold a higher place in human history when it is thirty-six centuries old, than it does now, when it is less than nineteen.

If we admit that the Babe born in the stable of Bethlehem was in very deed the Son of God, whose goings forth are from old and whose ways are everlasting, then it will be impossible for us to describe or to imagine the depths of humiliation to which he subjected himself in his whole earthly mission from the time when he was laid in a manger as a helpless child, to the time when he was laid in a tomb, crucified and dead. If we call to our aid the utmost resources of thought and illustration and argument, if we add to the wide domain of reason the infinite realm of feeling and imagination, we shall strive in vain to comprehend the mystery of the divine incarnation. We shall fail to measure the distance between the throne of heaven and the cross of Calvary. And yet it becomes us to avail ourselves of every device and suggestion which may help us to dwell on the mighty theme, till our minds are lost in wonder, love and praise.

To this end, suppose it to have been told in the high places of heaven that the dark ages of delay have ended and the time of restoration, for which kings and pro-

phets waited long, has come to the groaning earth. A spirit of inquiry has passed over many nations, the east and the west are moved together with high expectations of the coming King. Already the Son of God has appeared incarnate among men, and the mighty mission for the redemption of the lost millions of earth is begun. And now some ministering angel, just returned from a mission of love to a world farther off than the sunbeams travel, hastens down on wings of light to see how earth will receive her King.

He has seen the glory which the eternal Son had with the co-eternal Father before the world was. He has bowed with veiled face in the presence of the unapproachable Light. He has seen the Prince of the armies of heaven upon his throne of fiery flame and wheels of burning fire, surrounded and ministered unto by ten thousand times ten thousand of the angel host. And he naturally supposes that the Commander of so many myriads of the mighty, the Son of the Highest, the Firstborn of the immortal powers of heaven, will be attended by a retinue commensurate with the dignity of his divine nature, when coming forth upon the great mission of recreating a lost world. The angel visitant is prepared to witness the assemblage of all nations at some imperial capital. He expects nothing less than that the divine Messiah will be surrounded by legions of angels, every one of whom will seem to men to shine in glory likest unto God. He comes prepared to join with angels and with archangels, and all the company of

heaven, in offering visible homage to the world's Messiah, that men may see his greatness and submit to his authority.

With such expectations the inquiring angel approaches our earth. But he sees it illumined with no unusual light. He hears no sound of exultant joy from the race whom the Son of God had come to save. He has learned something of a chosen people, of a city where Jehovah had placed his name, of a temple which had been hallowed for ages by the awful symbols of the divine presence. He directs his flight to Jerusalem, hovers in mid-air over the temple mount. But he sees no signs of the august reception there.

The fire burns low on the great altar, and the lights are dim in the courts and cloisters of the holy house. The servants of the temple are asleep on the marble floors, the priests of the temple are asleep in their marble chambers, the long walks and lofty colonnades of the temple hill are silent and empty in the light of the risen moon. No proud Pharisee paces the mosaic floor, wearing long garments, muttering long prayers, to be heard and seen of men. The sounds of traffic and the tramp of busy feet are hushed in the markets and streets of the city. The sentinel cries the midnight watch from the wall, and moves on his weary beat, hearing no sound save the clank of his own armor and the echo of his own cry from vale and hill. Jerusalem sleeps on the greatest night in the world's history, all unconscious of the coming of her King. The inquiring

angel sees no signs of the Redeemer's presence in the city where the daily sacrifice for a thousand years had promised his coming and foreshadowed his death.

Can it be that the Son of God, to secure the homage of the mighty and to excite the admiration of the people, has chosen to make his first appearance at the capital of the world's great empire? May not he, who alone is worthy to wear the crown of all the earth, most fittingly set up his throne where the Cæsars send out their imperial decrees, and the Senate enacts universal law?

Alas! the mighty city on the banks of the Tiber is in no mood to welcome the reign of a Prince whose empire shall be peace. The gates of war indeed are shut for the time. The consuls have come home from their distant campaigns, and the victorious legions are resting from their march. But Rome has not lost the taste for scenes of agony and death. The millions of the mighty city rush with eager and savage joy to the circus and the amphitheatre where gladiators meet in mortal conflict. The sands of the arena are still smoking with the blood of men and beasts "butchered to make a Roman holiday." Nothing can call forth such wild and tumultuous applause from the crowded galleries of the circus as the sight of blood. And when the savage spectators see the drooped head of the wounded sinking in the sand, and the last drops ebbing slow from the red gash, their acclamations rise so loud that Tiber trembles underneath its banks, and the seven hills shake with the repli-

cation of the sound. And the congregated wisdom of the Roman Senate votes divine honors to the cruel despot who gratifies the brutal passions of the populace with such murderous amusement. Surely in such a city the heavenly visitant finds little disposition to rejoice at the coming of the Prince of peace.

Nor would the inquiring angel find a better preparation for the promised Messiah should he turn to Athens, the eye of Greece, the fountain of learning and philosophy, the home of the arts, the haunt of the muses. The Greeks are too busy with the fables of false gods to welcome a new revelation from the only Wise and True. If they gave heed for a moment to the words of an inspired apostle, it would be only from curiosity to hear what some foreign babbler would say.

It were vain to look for the new Life of the world in the great capitals of ancient empire, Thebes, Babylon, Nineveh. They had all been levelled with the dust long before by the judgments of heaven executed upon their crimes. The bird of night and the beast of prey had found a home amid the temples and palaces of Egypt's kings and the buried shrines of Assyrian gods.

Wearied with the fruitless search for the scene of the divine incarnation, the inquiring angel begins to suspect that he has mistaken the world where the great manifestation of God among men was about to be made. Shocked and confounded by the universal prevalence and the boundless excesses of misery and crime, he begins to fear that he has alighted upon the region of

the outcast and accursed. He is just about to wing his way back to his heavenly home, when suddenly he sees almost beneath him, to the south of Jerusalem, the whole air ablaze with the gathering myriads of the angel host. He hears the chorus of blest voices proclaiming the tidings that the Son of the Highest has appeared in the City of David in the person of a little child, and his earthly abode is with the beasts of the stall.

And there indeed is the mighty Redeemer, who has come to heal the sorrow and to take away the sin of the world. In all outward appearance he is as frail and helpless as the creatures whom he seeks to save If angels minister unto him in the manger, they are not permitted to display their glory before the eyes of men. If they sing songs of praise at his birth, it is only for the hearing of servants who watch and wait for their Lord. If the swift messengers of the skies bear the tidings of the great incarnation with joy to the courts of heaven, no such intelligence is announced in the palaces of earthly monarchs. Shepherds are told of the coming of the King of Glory, while princes and philosophers know it not.

The proud Pharisee, with ostentatious devotion, repeating long prayers in public places, courting the homage of the rabble in the streets of Jerusalem; the learned Rabbi, expounding the law in the schools and synagogues, know nothing of the Babe in the manger of Bethlehem. Their Messiah was to be an earthly prince, who should reign on the throne of David and crush the

heathen with his conquering arm, not the despised Nazarene who should suffer and die. The great and mighty of the earth, who are hedging themselves about with majesty and devising schemes to perpetuate their dominion to the latest posterity, make no account of that Child-Prince, whose throne shall be set up in millions of hearts, and whose kingdom shall endure forever and ever.

And surely it were hard for the most devout and pure in heart to believe that the King of Glory would stoop so low to lift up the fallen and make their sorrows his own. It were not in the highest reason to discover that the divine nature would shroud itself in the frail form of a child, whose lowly bed was made in a manger. The doctors of theology, in Jerusalem, would have thought it impious to say that angels might bow down and worship before that Babe in Bethlehem without forfeiting their allegiance to the King of heaven. No prophet would have been believed at that time if he had said of the Son of Mary:

"He shall feed the destitute by thousands, yet himself shall suffer the pangs of hunger. He shall give consolation to the most afflicted, yet himself become preeminently the Man of sorrows. He shall be holy, harmless, undefiled, separate from sin, yet on him shall be laid the sins of the world. He shall still the tempest with a word, yet himself want protection from heat and cold. He shall give rest to the weary and heavy-laden, yet himself have not where to lay his head. He shall

heal the sick with the touch of his hand, yet himself be as sensitive to bodily pain as they. He shall cast out devils with his word, yet himself be assailed by the temptations of Satan. He shall raise the dead by his own power, yet himself suffer the pangs of death."

That Child-King in the manger might indeed have astonished the world by the display of his real person, clothed in the splendors with which he shone in the highest heaven. He might have revealed himself at the very first in flaming fire, attended by ten thousand thousand of his ministering spirits. He might have descended from above upon Mount Zion with the trump of the archangel to herald his coming and the wings of cherubim to waft his flying throne. But he made himself of no reputation, and he took on him the form of a servant, and he submitted to the utmost humiliation that he might raise us up to the hope of glory and immortality.

And what are all the pomp and pride of the world in the presence of this divine humiliation? The Son of God consents to be a stranger and an exile, that we may be received as children and made heirs of eternal life. He lives unappreciated and unknown, that we may be proclaimed as his friends and crowned with glory in the presence of his Father and of the holy angels. He takes the form of a servant and does the work of a hireling, that we may be made kings and reign forever. The strength of Omnipotence clothes itself with the feebleness of infancy, the hand that spread out the heavens and laid the foundations of the earth, submits to be

bound and pierced, that we may be sure of the help and sympathy of him who made the worlds and holds the stars in his right hand.

This first page in the gospel history introduces us to humble homes, and comfortless houses, and cheerless apartments. It makes us the companions of men of meagre living and coarse garments, and laborious occupations. It takes us along weary journeys, subjects us to the rudeness of strangers, and gives us lodging at night with cattle. And yet in all these places and experiences the divine life dwells with men. They are all wrought into the earthly history of the Son of God, that we may learn to cherish the highest purposes in the humblest occupation.

Everything which it is fit for us to own, or seek, or do, should be made to help us in the true work of life. Dark caves, and rude barns, and dumb cattle, may be dedicated to God since Jesus was laid in a manger. Poor, uncultivated, hard-working men may be the especial favorites of heaven, since angels bore the best tidings, that ever came to this world, to shepherds. Hotels and lodging-houses may be made holy places, since the first homage paid to the Saviour of the world was offered by men who found him in the stalls of an inn. The most unwelcome exactions may bring us blessings, since it was the edict of the tax-gatherer that made Bethlehem the birth-place of Christ. All the beautiful things of art, and all the precious things of wealth, and all the sacred things of affection may be

given to Christ, since gold and frankincense and myrrh were offered to the infant Saviour before the world knew of his coming. All the depths and necessities of the hardest lot may be cheerfully borne, since the Son of the Highest passed through them all for the joy of saving the lost.

And this story of Bethlehem is one of great joy to all people. It is joy to the poor, for Christ comes to make them heirs of the kingdom of heaven. It is joy to the rich, for Christ comes to teach them how to use all their earthly possessions so as to lay up for themselves imperishable riches in everlasting habitations. It is joy to the ignorant, for Christ comes to make them wise unto eternal salvation. It is joy to the learned, for Christ comes to unfold mysteries that have been kept hidden from the foundation of the world. It is joy to the mourning and the comfortless, for Christ comes to heal all sorrow and to bind up every broken heart. It is joy to the guilty, the condemned, and the despairing, for Christ comes to take away transgression, to bear the sins of many, and to give himself a ransom for the world. The wave of joy flowing forth from the angel-song of Bethlehem is wide enough to encompass the earth, and rich enough to bless every human soul, and deep enough to flow on through all coming time.

The divine birth in Bethlehem is worthy to be commemorated with gifts of love and songs of joy by old and young in every land, in every age. All the events of past history taken together are of less consequence

to us than the single fact that the Son of God became incarnate, suffered and died for our salvation. All the researches of science, all the reasonings of philosophy, all the inventions of genius, have not poured so much light upon the world as the knowledge of the glory of God, shining for men in the face of Jesus Christ. The highest and longest enjoyment, the acquisition of millions of money, success in all worldly enterprises, and full title to wear the brightest earthly crown, were nothing like so great reason for gratitude and joy as the angel gives the nations in the tidings: "Unto you is born a Saviour who is Christ the Lord."

The Home in Nazareth.

He came to Nazareth, where he had been brought up.—LUKE iv. 16.

III.

THE HOME IN NAZARETH.

AFTER the divine birth in Bethlehem, the hurried flight into Egypt, and the brief sojourn in the strange land, the story of the mysterious incarnation returns to the secluded spot where it began, among the hills of Galilee. The Son of God has appeared upon the great mission of redemption; he comes to bring the greatest blessing heaven can send to earth; he has been proclaimed as King and Messiah by a multitude of the heavenly host; he has received the homage of wise men from the East and of devout men in Bethlehem, and yet he must be hidden from the world thirty years before he makes himself known.

For thirty years this strong and mighty Son of God must live, and toil, and suffer, and wait, in dependence and obscurity, as if he were the least and weakest of the sons of men. For a whole generation he must shut the great secret of his work and character in his own heart, teaching first the long, hard lesson of silence and patience, and preparation, in order that he may be heard the more gladly by the poor and the common people, when he speaks. The first creation was carried on from age to age, through the long periods of the divine day. And the second creation, when Christ

comes to make all things new, must show no sign of haste, or it will not seem like God's work. Man's work is most like the divine, when he learns to make haste slowly and to bide his time.

In regard to the precise manner in which Jesus spent the years of his earthly life from childhood to mature age, the sacred writers maintain the most profound and significant reserve. For thirty years he says nothing of his divine mission, and yet his silence speaks, and his humble toil as a carpenter is a part of his high work as God's Messiah. He is declared with power to be the Son of the Highest in the secluded life which he led at Nazareth, as well as in his public career when the world went after him, and his presence in the desert made it the gathering place of thousands.

The irreverent and inquisitive spirit of later times has tried to lift the awful veil with which the gospel story covers the sacred home of the child, and the secular occupation of the man, Jesus, before his manifestation to the world. But all such attempts have only served to impress us more deeply with the wisdom of the divine purpose which has shrouded that early period in the life of the world's great Liberator in impenetrable mystery. Besides the four inspired gospels, in which we read the words and follow the steps of Jesus under divine direction, we have seven other ancient compositions, bearing the name of gospels, and attempting to tell more than the sacred record has told concerning the life of the Holy Child in Nazareth. Within four hundred years of

Christ's time we find in various authors references to twenty-six other compositions, called gospels, which have all perished. Judging from the character of those which remain, we have little reason to regret the loss of those which have perished. They only serve to show how much wiser and more satisfactory is the silence of the inspired record than the foolish talk and the empty fables of men who add to what is written in God's book. Love has communicated all that can help our faith or comfort our hearts. Wisdom has withholden what would only awaken doubt or gratify a profane and profitless curiosity.

Nevertheless we are told the place where Jesus was brought up. In our day devout pilgrims go half-round the globe to see the retired mountain village where the Saviour of the world was hidden from the eyes of the learned and the mighty for so many years. In the early spring time, when the sunlight is strong on the Galilean hills, and the young flowers are creeping up the stony pathways from the plain, the white tents of travellers are as familiar in the vale of Nazareth as the white houses of the town. And it is becoming in us to manifest a profound interest in the secluded spot where the divine Child grew and waxed strong in spirit, and increased in wisdom and stature, and in favor with God and man. Nowhere in all the land of the gospel story can we more vividly recall the scenes and the surroundings of the daily life of Jesus, than we can when treading the paths which were trodden by his youthful feet, and resting

among the hills that cast their morning light and evening shadows upon his youthful home.

From that humble home in Nazareth there has gone forth a power which has already encompassed the earth, and it is destined to sway the sceptre of supreme command over all nations. The name of Nazareth was written upon the cross in Latin, Greek, and Hebrew, the three great languages which gave law, art, and religion to the world, and the name shall be associated with everything that rules, refines, and consecrates the human race long as faith finds a home on the earth, long as Christ has a kingdom in the hearts of men.

In these later times there has grown into form and living use one language which embraces in its common and cultivated speech all the excellences of the three mighty ones of old which were nailed to the cross. This language of ours speaks with the power that enacts law, and commands armies, and controls commerce, and brings forth the treasures of darkness from the mines of the earth, and invents and builds machines and engines to toil for man in all the fields and workshops of the world. This language of ours, better than that of classic Greece, embodies all that is most beautiful in thought, refined in sentiment, pure and ennobling in its influence upon individual character and society at large. And our daily speech is far richer than the sacred Hebrew in its capacity for the expression of the true religious life and the feelings with which man should come to God in the highest acts of worship.

A SCENE FROM THE CHILDHOOD OF JESUS.

And as the name of Nazareth was written three times on the cross in the three great languages which then embodied the power, the culture, and the worship of the world, so now the same sacred name, in our language, speaks with mightier power, and to more people, and for higher purposes than Jew, or Greek, or Roman ever dreamed. It is now associated with the greatest achievements and possessions of man. It represents the thought which lies at the foundation of the deepest science and which inspires the loftiest song of earth, and it is still borne and accepted by him who sits upon the throne of heaven. Such a village, however small, and obscure, and despised, may well awaken our most rational and devout curiosity.

The double range of Lebanon diminishes in height and spreads out into waving ridges and rounded hills as it runs southward through Galilee, approaching the great plain of Esdraelon. Here and there the mountain mass separates for a little space on the surface, and then unites and flows on, as the water of a swift-running stream, divided by a jutting rock, unites again at a little distance below the obstacle, and then flows on at its former level, leaving a hollow space between the point of separation and of union. In such a narrow, depressed valley, a mile long and high up above the plain, and walled in by still higher hills, stands the little town whose existence was not known in history till it became the home of Jesus, but whose name has now been carried to the ends of the earth.

The pathway to Jerusalem, which the family of Jesus travelled every year, going and returning, runs southward between high and ragged hedges of cactus and patches of irregular ground, that are green with wheat and barley in spring-time, and brown and bare all the rest of the year. The path descends the valley for a mile or so, and then begins to climb the slanting and rock-built hills. The vast ledges of limestone are bare and smooth, and the sure-footed and sound-limbed horse of the country slips at every step as he climbs the steep. We turn to the right and left as we ascend, following what travellers for ages have chosen for the easiest track, where all is bad. The hoofs of animals and the feet of men have worn the rocks, but there is no sign that anybody has ever attempted to make a road. The hills are composed of bare, white ledges of glistening limestone. Loose, smooth-worn stumbling-stones lie so thick everywhere that the horse can seldom get his foot square upon the ground. But nobody has ever thought of making the rough places smooth for man or beast. In the steepest part of the track most travellers dismount to save the risk of a fall.

The backward view of Nazareth, from the ridge of the road running south towards Jerusalem, shows the form and situation of the town better than the view from the road north to Cana or east to Tabor or Nain. As seen from this point of observation, the main body of the village runs up the hill towards the Maronite church, in a direction nearly west from the line of the valley which

begins at the fountain of the Virgin, where travellers generally pitch their tents. From the camping-ground the village looks as if it extended in a direction north-east and southwest, and there it seems to rest wholly upon the slope of the highest of the fifteen hills which surround the sacred valley. It is needless to search for the hill where the enraged men of Nazareth sought to cast Jesus down headlong. As we look back from the ridge of the road going southward, we can see a dozen places on the north and northwestern side of the town that would answer all the demands of the Gospel story.

The descent into the plain of Esdraelon from the rim of the mountain wall which guards the youthful home of Jesus is worse riding than the way up out of the valley. The long, ragged and winding staircase of bare ledges and loosened stones is so steep and frightful that few riders keep their seat in going down. The pathway turns to the right and the left in search of some safer footing for man and beast. Sometimes it sinks deep into the soft limestone, and sometimes it is nearly lost on the harder surface. Sometimes it divides into half a dozen tracks, and the sure-footed and sagacious horse is intent upon taking one as the safest, while the rider is determined to take another, and the dumb beast is blamed and beaten for stumbling, when he would have gone safely if his master had let him have his own way. The road, if road it may be called, is doubtless as good now as it was when Joseph and Mary left their quiet home in the mountain valley and went down that rocky

steep on their way to Bethlehem to be enrolled according to Roman law.

Ingenious writers have sought for some sacred or mystical meaning in the name Nazareth. Its best meaning is that which it derives from the name of Jesus, and which grows in greatness and beauty fast as the world grows in the capacity to comprehend its worth. Some have found in the word a foreshadowing of the Branch of the Lord, beautiful and glorious, which should bring forth fruit excellent and comely for the escaped of Israel and for the nations of them that are saved. Some have thought it contained a promise of rescue to all that are poor and needy, and of protection to all that are beset by many foes. Others say it signifies a watch-tower set on high to hang out signals of invasion, and to warn the endangered to flee to the stronghold of hope Others would have it mean the secluded and guarded home, kept by holy watchers day and night, and girt around by the everlasting hills. Still others see in the name the white shining city, enthroned among a thousand towns, to be a sign and symbol of the Holy City, descending out of heaven from God, having the glory of God for its light and the blessed walking its golden streets.

If we cannot accept these learned dreams of devout men, we can at least see the beauty and fitness with which an old Latin father calls Nazareth the flower of of Galilee. The name, taken as a mere fancy and not as a study of words, was well chosen, whether we refer

its meaning to the millions of flowers strewn through the valley, or to the appearance of the little white town itself, resting in the cup of the one colossal flower, of which the fifteen encompassing hills are the green petals, set around to enhance its beauty and to protect it from danger. As compared with all other Galilean towns, Nazareth must have been beautiful for situation, and greatly to be desired for a quiet and healthful home.

The brown soil of the enclosed basin is fertile, and it responds readily to the rude culture of the country. The sunlight is more powerful and stimulating to vegetation than with us, and it brings forth a deeper color in the flowers and a more rapid growth in the grain. In the bright spring days the white houses and the bare hills glimmer and glow with such dazzling intensity that it pains the eye to look at them. And yet the white rocks and gray bare ledges of limestone, that stand out here and there upon the slopes and upper ridges of the hills, afford a pleasing and impressive contrast with the green hollows and cultivated grounds below.

There is scarcely any such thing as we call gardens in Palestine. The enclosures, which for the sake of a name are called such in the East, seem dry and bare and dusty to those who have been accustomed to the green world of the West. Flowers are seldom cultivated for their beauty where they grow in such profusion, and they are never set with any regard for grace in form and harmony in color. Clusters of orange and pomegranate, orchards of olive and fig trees, grow out

of beds of bare stones. The paths among the trees and hedges are white and dusty in the dry season, and muddy in the wet. And yet in spring-time there is such a profusion of flowers and trees and vines in the vale of Nazareth that the bareness of the landscape is hidden, and the transient visitor, in his enthusiasm, speaks of it as a garden of peace and beauty. Walled in and sheltered on every side from blighting winds and sudden changes, the valley enjoys a mild and even climate, and brings forth fruit and grain the first and best of the country and the season.

The country about Nazareth has far less of a desolate and mournful aspect than that about Jerusalem. The once populous Galilee has indeed been so completely emptied of its inhabitants that the traveller now looks in vain for a village or a house, where in Christ's time a million people found their home. And yet the flowers bloom there in as great abundance and beauty, and the birds are as joyous in their morning song, as when Jesus sat on the mountain side and said: Consider the lilies; behold the fowls of the air. And the brightness and the joyousness of the whole world of nature, in the region where Jesus lived and taught, were in sympathy with the spirit of him who came to brighten all human homes, and to beautify all the paths of human life.

When Jesus came to Jerusalem, in the days of his teaching, he always sought relief from the weariness of disputing with the dry and literal doctors of the temple, by going out to Bethany at evening and resting in

a village home, like the many that he had visited in Galilee. Whenever he appeared in the Holy City, it seemed as if a shadow of deep sorrow and pity fell upon his spirit, and he spoke with less of his wonted simplicity and openness concerning his mission and mighty works. But when he came back to the green hills and bright villages of the north, his talk with the people was as clear as their own sunlight, and he spoke as one in full sympathy with all the brightest aspects of nature and all the open air occupations of men.

It will take all the centuries of time and the ages of eternity to measure the distinction which the name of Jesus has conferred upon this little village of Nazareth. Everything which meets the eye within this narrow vale is associated forever with him, whose work shall become the song of all nations, and whose glory shall fill the earth and the heavens. Here began the quiet story of a life which stands alone in the history of the world—a life greater than the lives of all the Cæsars, and destined to make the lives of millions blessed. To some humble home in this green valley Gabriel, the mighty minister of God, was sent to bear the best tidings ever brought from heaven to earth—tidings that the Prince, the Son of the Highest, of whom the same heavenly messenger had spoken to Daniel, the prophet, five hundred years before, was about to appear. After the hurried flight into the dark and dead land of Egypt, the infant Saviour came up to this calm retreat to grow strong in the bright sunlight and to draw strength from the everlasting hills.

Breathing this mountain air, drinking from these crystal fountains, eating the fruit of these luxuriant gardens, living in a home just like one of these white stone-houses, he grew from infancy to manhood. He made one of a large family, all the members of which lived, ate and slept in one room, sat on the earth-floor at their meals, wore the same garment day and night. Through streets, as narrow and filthy as these of Nazareth to-day, he walked for years. Along these winding field paths and between these thorny cactus hedges he went out to his daily work. Up and down these terraced hill-sides, up and down the steep and stony road from the great plain to the mountain valley, he passed as we now see peasants going, with the plough on the shoulder and the goad in the hand, to their morning toil and their evening rest.

Jesus listened to the birds of the air, the lark, the linnet, the nightingale, and the turtle-dove, whose voices are now heard in the valley, and they sung for him the same notes that they now sing for us. He delighted himself with the wild flowers, the anemone, the geranium, the marigold and the cyclamen, that still make the green hollows and the stony hill-sides glow with their beauty. This dome of sky spread over him with the glory of morning clouds, with the brightness of dazzling noon, with the golden hues of sunset and the serenity of the eternal stars.

When Jesus would escape from the noise of the town and the confinement of the little stone-house, these ever-

lasting hills offered him their silence and their solitudes for a sanctuary. These gray-leaved olive groves and dark-green fig-orchards beyond the common walks of idlers and talkers, covered him with their shadows when he spent the night alone in communion with his great Father. These lonely glens and cave-like openings in the hill-sides heard his voice when he went out before the dawn to pray. From these very heights, which still encircle the vale of Nazareth, the Son of God looked forth pityingly upon a land that waited a thousand years for his coming and received him not when he came. From the rocky walls, reared without hands, around his mountain home, he refreshed his spirit in the morning winds from the great sea, over which his gospel should be carried to nations and continents then unknown.

We do not, indeed, know the precise spot on which the home of Jesus stood, although tradition besets the traveller of to-day at every corner with its credulous babble, and guides stand ready to show more than human eyes have ever seen of the divine Infancy. We cannot tell which one of these many white paths in the valley and up the hill-sides was most frequently trodden by the feet of Jesus. But when we see the women of Nazareth coming forth morning and evening, to bring water from the fountain of the village, and often a little child follows the steps of the mother coming and going, we can easily believe that the Holy Child of old often went to the same fountain in company with one who is blessed above all others among women. As we gaze

on the group of women and children that gather about the fountain at the going down of the sun, we feel that nowhere in all the Holy Land can we come nearer to the steps of him who there as a child began the great work of creating a new manhood for the world; we are sure, beyond all question, that the home of Jesus was in this quiet valley, and that the little town where he was brought up is still here. And that alone is enough to make the valley of Nazareth, with all its surrounding hills, sacred forevermore in the hearts of all who believe that Jesus is indeed the Son of God.

The traveller who crosses the great battle plain of Esdraelon going north, reviving its memories of blood as he rides for hours through a waving sea of russet barley and green wheat, and then climbs the steep and slippery staircase of rock to the edge of the basin of Nazareth, and looks down upon the quiet village shaded with cypresses, embosomed in groves of fig and olive trees, and enriched with gardens of all green herbs and fruits, feels for the moment that he has alighted upon a happy valley, where the strife and pride of the world can never come. He imagines the peaceful inhabitants of this secluded vale in the days of Barak, and Gideon, and Saul, climbing the natural rampart with which they were surrounded, and looking forth with horror on plundered fields, and burning towns, and slaughtered people around Tabor, and Gilboa, and Megiddo, and Carmel, and rejoicing that the wasteful passions which make man a wolf to man have never disturbed their peace or de-

stroyed their homes. In the fond dream suggested by the first sight of that peaceful abode among the hills, the weary traveller says to himself that here at last, out of the track of great armies, afar from the vices and corruptions of great cities, in happy ignorance of the pomp and pride of the great world, truth may speak upon every lip, virtue adorn every home, peace dwell in every heart.

Alas! that the first page in the history of this mountain village, and the first hour's experience within its present limits should dissipate so pleasant a dream. Scarcely has the traveller pitched his tent beside the fountain at the head of the valley, when he receives notice from the authorities of the town that he has fallen among thieves, and that he will need a soldier guard to keep his baggage and horses by night. He is in doubt which he has most reason to fear, the guard or the thief. He finds in the end that his only safety is to watch himself.

No mountain wall can shut out the enemy that found entrance at the gate of Paradise. No seclusion from the world can exempt individuals or families from that mortal contagion which began with the first sin and which still runs in the blood of the whole human race. The people of Nazareth had a bad reputation even among the Galileans, the rudest and the most turbulent of the people of Palestine, and the residence of Jesus in the little town for thirty years did not remove the reproach of an evil name.

How significant and awful the humiliation of the Son of God that he should consent to live for so many years unhonored, unknown, as a day laborer in this rude, despised and out-of-the-way town. It would have been infinite condescension in him to have lived for a single year in the holiest and happiest place on earth. It would have been a concealment of his glory in him to have maintained the state of kings in the most gorgeous palace ever built by human hands. It would have made him seem to the angel host as if deprived of his dominion and his crown for him to receive nothing but the gifts and homage of nations, though every human tongue and language were burdened with his praise.

But for thirty years he dwelt in a town from which it was thought a wonder if any good thing should come. He passed his daily life with a people whose treatment of him warranted the bad reputation which their neighbors gave them. He began his mighty work of lifting the whole human race up from darkness and misery by going down himself to that condition which the proud world despises and tramples upon. He set his own feet upon the paths which the poor and the neglected must tread. He took to his own bosom the woes which the afflicted must suffer. He lived thirty years of his life in this depraved and despised Nazareth, that he might pour silent contempt upon the world's pride of place and fortune and fame. He passed by the renowned seats of wisdom, and glory, and empire, and made his home in this humble mountain village, that

his followers might learn to make any post of duty honorable by their own greatness and fidelity.

The treatment which Jesus received at the hands of his own townsmen when he attempted to begin his public ministry at Nazareth, is a sad and fearful exhibition of the worst passions of the human heart. He had been baptized in Jordan in the presence of a great multitude of people, and as he came up from the river-side he had been proclaimed by a voice from heaven as the Son of God. He had triumphed in a protracted and three-fold conflict over all the powers which the Prince of darkness could bring against him. He had manifested forth his glory by mighty works and gracious words at Cana, just over the hill on the north of Nazareth, at Capernaum, the busy and populous city at the head of the Sea of Galilee, and at Jerusalem, the sacred capital of the whole land. He had returned to the secluded home where he had lived so long, and where everybody knew him. He had passed through the country openly and deliberately from town to town, teaching and working miracles as he went in the synagogues, in the streets, on the hill-sides, by the sea-shore, wherever the people would gather to hear, wherever the sick could be brought to be healed.

His fame had gone before him, and his return was sure to awaken curiosity even in Nazareth itself. Natives of the village had been at Capernaum and Jerusalem, and had come home to tell what wonderful words they had heard from the lips of the Carpenter, and what mighty

works they had seen done by him. Members of his own family shared in the surprise and the suspicion that he was not altogether in his right mind. Some went so far as to say that he must have made some dark compact with the Prince of evil, and so had acquired forbidden knowledge and the power to do mighty works. Some said he must be a disturber of the public peace and a deceiver of the people, encouraging them to depart from old customs, to disregard sacred traditions, and to demand a release from the bondage of subjection to the letter of the law. Some said he meant well, but that he was mistaken in supposing himself called of God to put himself before the world as the promised Messiah.

He came to the home of his youth with a feeling of tender interest in the quiet town where he had spent so many years, and with strong desire that his own kinsmen and acquaintances might be the first to declare their faith in his divine mission, and to share in the blessings which he came to bring. But he was received with so much suspicion and jealousy, that even he, who had lived with the people for thirty years, marvelled at their unbelief. He went about their streets, talked with the women that came to the fountain, and the traders that came to the market, spoke kindly to little children and encouragingly to weary mothers, laid his hand on a few sick persons and healed them, and sought rest at night in the house where he had been known from a child, and where now the members of his own family were in doubt whether to pity or to blame him most for all that he had done.

When the Sabbath came he joined the company that were making their way up the hill to the synagogue, went in and took his seat with the common people, as he had been accustomed to do in former years. The service of song, and prayer, and reading the Scriptures was conducted by the chief elder in the form derived from the Temple worship. When it came to the lesson for the day, selected from the prophecies of Isaiah, the leader, who was at liberty to call upon whom he pleased, seeing Jesus in the house invited him to take the elevated stand in the midst of the congregation and read. He at once mounted the rostrum, and the servant of the synagogue brought him the scroll from the chest which stood at the end of the house towards Jerusalem. Unrolling the manuscript and finding the chapter which was set down in the order of service for the day, he read only one verse and part of another, and none of the passage which he selected was in the lesson appointed for the day. Standing in the midst of his own townsmen, himself the living and divine interpreter of the prophet's words, he read with such grace and authority as the Nazarenes had never seen in any man before. "The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he hath anointed me to preach the gospel to the poor, he hath sent me to heal the broken-hearted, to preach deliverance to the captives, and the recovering of sight to the blind, and to set at liberty those that are bruised, to preach the acceptable year of the Lord."

Stopping in the midst of a sentence, that he might

take from the prophet just what he wished for his purpose and no more, not reading any part of the lesson selected for the regular service of the day, he rolled up the scroll, gave it to the sexton of the synagogue and went back to his seat. The Jews were accustomed to regard the sacred writings with such deep reverence that ordinarily they would give no heed to a speaker, but follow the roll of the law or the prophets with their eyes until they had seen it carried back from the reader's desk and hidden in the sacred chest, at the end of the house towards Jerusalem. But in this case, no sooner had Jesus closed the book and sat down, than all eyes were fastened on him. His manner and expression had been so extraordinary, he had spoken the words of the prophet so much as if they were his own, that everybody wondered, and waited with breathless attention to hear what he would say.

It was a great occasion for the little town of Nazareth when Jesus read those words from the ancient prophet in their synagogue and said, "This day is this Scripture fulfilled in your ears." It was the first time that he had publicly declared himself to them to be the ANOINTED of the Lord. None of the great prophets, or kings, or judges in the whole line of Jewish history had ventured to assume that exalted and awful name, the MESSIAH. And yet here was the Son of a carpenter, who had worked for days' wages at his trade in that town for many a year, putting himself forth before the assembly as that glorious and divine personage whose

NAZARETH.

coming had been looked for with longing hearts four thousand years, and in whose kingdom all the nations of the earth should be blessed. Leaving the Holy City, and all the sacred and renowned places in the land, and all the wise and mighty among the people behind, he had come to this rude and despised mountain village to speak for the first time the greatest and the most gracious words that had ever been spoken on earth. In this humble synagogue of Nazareth he had made the declaration which the faithful in Israel had waited and longed for years and for centuries to hear, and had died with the prayer that the promised Deliverer would hasten his coming.

Oh! happy city, to whom the Prince of Peace himself brings the message of salvation. First in opportunity, be thou first to welcome the world's Redeemer, and all nations shall call thee blessed. First to hear the glad sound which millions waited for, let thy voice break forth in the first hosannas to the Lord's Anointed, and streams of salvation shall flow from thy favored valley to all lands, and pilgrims from the ends of the earth shall come to walk in the shadow of thy mountains and to worship on the spot where Christ received the first homage of a ransomed world.

It was the grandest opportunity that any city ever had to make for itself a glorious and an everlasting name. By receiving Jesus with the confidence which he deserved, and opening their hearts and homes to his coming, that little town among the hills of Galilee could have put

itself at the head of a revolution which has already encompassed the globe, and which is destined to carry light and blessing to every human home. If the Nazarenes had given their great Prophet the honor due to his character and his mission, they would have made their quiet vale a welcome retreat for him from his public toil, they would have sent out their best and noblest citizens to minister unto him in all his journeys, they would have made their town more hospitable than Bethany and more holy than Jerusalem, to receive him when he needed rest, and to cheer him when his soul was troubled, they could have made their mountain village one on which the Gospel story would cast no shadow of reproach, and in which the Christian pilgrim of all time would find nothing but memories of gratitude and peace.

Alas! for unhappy Nazareth that she should not know the time of her visitation, and that her rare opportunity to obtain blessed and immortal distinction among the nations of the earth should be hidden from her by envy and unbelief, and worse than lost.

The eyes of all in the synagogue were fastened upon Jesus when he claimed that the great Messianic prophecy was fulfilled in him, and that his was the especial mission to bring in the acceptable year of the Lord. At first they were awed and fascinated by the sweetness and gentleness, by the majesty and authority, with which he went on to unfold the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven. They sat in silence and in wonder as he spoke,

for they had never heard such gracious words from human lips before. They forgot who it was that was speaking and where they were as they listened, and they all bore witness by their eager looks and kindling eyes and breathless attention that no one ever spoke like that in the synagogue of Nazareth before. If an angel from heaven had read the scroll and expounded its meaning to that assembly on the Sabbath morning, he would not have been looked upon with deeper wonder and awe than was Jesus when he sat down and said, "This day is this scripture fulfilled in your ears."

By and by, surprise gave place to curiosity, admiration to envy, and applause to anger. When they began to think who it was, and how great and awful was the mission which he had taken upon himself, their astonishment knew no bounds. They were angry with themselves because they had listened to him with such deep attention. They had seen Jesus a child in their streets. His home was among the poor; he pursued an humble and laborious occupation for years. He had been at the service of anybody for pay, and the work that he did for peasants and ploughmen was just like that done by carpenters in Nazareth for centuries. His family never gained the distinction of learning, or riches, or rank, or power.

The Nazarenes thought that it was not for such an one to say, The spirit of the Lord is upon me and I am anointed to proclaim the year of the right hand of the Most High. They only knew him to be poor and de-

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pendent like themselves, more in need of a deliverer himself than able to deliver others. They were looking for a Messiah who should come with the state of a king and the glory of a conqueror. He must appear at the head of armies, and his legions must fly as the clouds. He must crush the heathen in his wrath, and deliver Israel from every yoke. He must put down the mighty from their seats, and exalt the men of low degree to crowns of honor and thrones of power.

Such a Messiah will Nazareth receive as the anointed of the Lord and the deliverer of Israel. To the words of such a prophet will Nazareth give heed, the sceptre of such a king will Nazareth obey. But how shall this rude and jealous people be made to see the Lord's Anointed, the desired of nations in this Son of Mary, this brother of James and Joses and Jude, who had carried his tools in their streets, and had been seen at his toil as a carpenter in their town for twenty years? The very humiliation which the Son of God had taken upon himself in love for our lost race, and which should have opened every heart to receive him, was an offence to the envious and passionate people with whom he had lived so long.

He had promised the kingdom of heaven to the poor. They desired him to bestow the riches and honors of a kingdom on earth. He had come to comfort those who mourn for their sins. They were not looking for such consolation as comes to the humble and contrite heart. He had preached deliverance to those who were held

REJECTED AT NAZARETH.

captive by man's first and greatest foe. They were more anxious to be delivered from bondage to Cæsar. He had come in meekness and lowliness, in poverty and sorrow. They wanted riches and splendor; the parade of monarchs and the trumpets of victory.

And so they all cried out against him with cursing and wrath. The whole house was in an uproar. Every one pressed forward to lay violent hands on him whom a few minutes before they had regarded with silent wonder and deep awe. Out of their synagogue, out of their city, out of the world would they cast him, whose only offence was the meekness and grace with which he had spoken the truth. The favored people who were the first to hear the public announcement of his mission from the lips of the Messiah himself were the first to cry, "Away with him."

With one consent and with deafening cries they broke up the assembly. They surrounded him with a swaying and tumultuous crowd. Every one was eager to lay hands upon him, and to strike one of the blows that should destroy him. They hurried him forth to the brow of a precipice on the hill-side, where the synagogue stood higher than all the houses of the town. They were just ready to cast him down headlong, when the awe with which they looked upon his face as he spoke came back upon them. Their hands dropped, their outcries ceased, the crowd fell back. The intended victim of their violence walked quietly through the midst of the mob with no other defence than the glance of his eye. The

most enraged could not lift a hand against him. When he was gone and some who were foremost in violence were asked why they let him go, they could only say, "Never man looked like this man." He had gone from them as quietly as he came, not because he was afraid to die, but because his work was not yet done. When the hour for the great sacrifice comes the victim will be ready. Now it was enough that his native Nazareth has had the opportunity to receive the greatest honor ever conferred on any town or city since the world began, and Nazareth has lost that opportunity and lost it forever.

In the course of the following winter, he came once more and for the last time to this secluded vale where he had been brought up. Then the people had had time to reflect and to repent of their madness in banishing their only citizen whose name has given their town a place in history or a memorial in the hearts of men. He came when the fame of his mighty works had filled the whole land. He had silenced and cast out demons with his word. The mysterious and mighty powers of darkness had been subject to his will. The sick, and the palsied, and the lame, and the lunatic had been brought to him from all Galilee and from the adjoining countries, and they had been made sound and strong by the touch of his hand. He had given sight to the blind, and hearing to the deaf, and speech to the dumb. At Capernaum and at the neighboring hill-town of Nain, in sight of his youthful home, he had raised the dead to

life. And these evidences of his divine power had been witnessed by thousands. He had done his mighty works and spoken his gracious words in the open light of day, with no art of concealment, no shrinking from the public eye. And the name of Nazareth had gone with him in all his journeys, and it was destined to go with his name to the ends of the earth.

But still the blinded and fanatical people of that mountain village could see nothing but a carpenter in the Son of Mary. They were not willing to acknowledge that the poor day-laborer, whom they had often seen at his toil, and to whom some of them had paid wages for work done, was a king in disguise and mightier than all the kings of the earth. Having committed themselves to the rejection of Jesus, it was too much for their pride to recognize in him the promised Redeemer of Israel and the Saviour of the world. And so Nazareth confirmed and fastened on itself forever the dreadful reputation of having been the first to receive the public announcement of the Messiah from his own lips, and the first to reject him.

At this time, as before, he went into the synagogue on the Sabbath day and taught, and the people were astonished at his words. He spoke with such winning grace and with such mighty power, that they wondered and wondered how the carpenter had acquired such wisdom, how a plain citizen of their unlettered town could address them with more meaning and authority than all the masters in Israel. And yet now, as before, it only

made them angry to see a boy out of their own streets, and a journeyman out of their shops, setting his simple word above all the traditions of the elders, and prescribing the law of life for all that live. It made them mad to see him so strong and wise, so meek and gentle, and themselves so brutish and blind. His silent presence was a continual rebuke to their violent temper, their rude speech, and their envious self-conceit. They restrained themselves from any outbreak of violence and attempted murder. But all the time he was there they wished him away, and they were glad when he was gone.

It seems strange to us that the men of old should have made such a fatal mistake in judging of Jesus, even while hearing his gracious words and witnessing his mighty works. But Jesus is declared to be the Son of God and the Saviour of the world with more truth and power now than he was then. The evidences of his divine mission have been increasing from century to century for eighteen hundred years. For so long a time he has been fulfilling the word that he spoke in the synagogue of Nazareth, bringing rest to the weary and healing to the broken-hearted and deliverance to the captives. On all the continents of the earth and the great islands of the sea he has unloosed the heavy burdens and set at liberty those that were bound, and proclaimed the acceptable year of the Lord. The afflicted and sorrowing have heard his voice, and ceased to mourn. The blind, sitting by the wayside and begging

for light, have heard him pass and asked his help, and to them there has been no more night. The worldly and the wicked, the disappointed and the unhappy, have found in him what they have never been able to buy with money, or invent with wisdom or conquer with power—they have found rest for the weary soul. The ignorant, the vicious and the brutalized have been lifted from their degradation, clothed in clean garments, set in happy homes, started upon a new and joyous life by the quickening word of Christ and by the gracious power with which he is making man's world all new.

And surely men need no longer make the mistake that was made by the Nazarenes when they were offended at Jesus and sent him away. He is coming even now in his glory among the nations, and the rocks and the mountains are vocal with the songs that the ransomed sing. All discoveries in science, all invention in the arts, all conquests of the hidden powers of nature, are testimonies to the true light which Jesus has poured upon the world, and which shall grow in power and in blessing until it fills all the dark places of the earth.

That calm and gentle Teacher, that mighty and victorious Master, who went out of Nazareth in the old time, still walks with men in lonely paths, still dwells with men in humble homes, still puts forth his hand to the work which the weary have to do. And it is the wisdom of life to walk with him, the honor of life to work with him, and the joy of life to rest with him in the

home of peace, where he giveth his beloved sleep. Oh, come, blessed ages of the future, when the rejected One of Nazareth shall find a home in every heart! Let the long dark ages of storm and conflict cease, and the Sun of righteousness break forth in the dawn of heaven's everlasting day.

Home Life in Capernaum.

Leaving Nazareth, he came and dwelt in Capernaum.—MATT. iv. 13.

IV.

HOME-LIFE IN CAPERNAUM.

AT Bethlehem Jesus was born, at Nazareth he was brought up, at Jerusalem he died. Capernaum enjoyed the rare distinction of being called his own city. At Capernaum alone he is said to have been at home. Expelled from the synagogue where he had been accustomed to worship from his youth, driven from the streets of the hill-town by a rude and fanatical mob, he left the scenes where he had lived as a child and toiled as a man, and came down to Capernaum to make his abode and begin his ministry with the dwellers by the sea.

Some have sought to find in the name of the city an attraction for him who came to heal the broken-hearted and to give rest to weary souls. One says it signifies the Place of Loveliness, and another the Abode of Comfort, and still another the City of the Consoler. However fitting such names might be as symbols of the work which Christ came to do, the meaning is hard to find, and the mission of the great Master never needed help from fanciful interpretations of names and forms of earthly things. Like Nazareth, Capernaum was not known in history until it became the home of Jesus. Unlike Nazareth, it has passed so completely out of history that the keenest observers are perplexed and wearied

with the endeavor to find where it stood. Its sole distinction comes from having received Christ as a guest and rejected Christ as a Saviour. We can never think of it apart from the mighty works which Christ did in its streets, and the mighty woe which Christ pronounced upon its unbelief.

Capernaum was but one of nine cities standing directly upon the lake-shore, the whole circuit of which could be seen from the roof of the synagogue which the Roman centurion had built for the Jews, and in which Jesus often taught. From the same point of observation the view all round the western shore and southwest towards Tiberias, embraced numerous high places and hollows in the hillsides, set with villages, the least of which was large enough to be called a city. They were beautiful, as most towns in the East are apt to be, when seen far off, and when contrasted with the dull, gray rock, and the dark, brown earth out of which the white-washed houses were built. The cities on the hills and by the shore were all crowded with a restless and busy population. During the day, the whole surface of the lake was alive with boats moving to and fro, with the songs and shouts of men pulling at the oars, and when night came on hundreds of fishermen put forth to let down their nets and gather of every kind.

Jesus did not go down to Capernaum to seek retirement or to find a quiet and cultivated people. The town was in the very focus of all social and industrial activity in northern Palestine. The region was more densely

peopled than any other portion of the country, and the population was more various than elsewhere. Jew, Greek and Roman mingled with Arab, Persian and Egyptian in the streets of the ten cities and in the trade of the miniature sea. The Romans were the best road-makers of all the ancient nations. Before they came into the possession of Palestine, the lines of travel and of traffic were only such rude paths as are made by the constant passing of man and beast. I once took great interest in seeing a Roman milestone standing beside the travelled path a little south of Sidon. Ten years afterward passing that way, for a wonder I saw the Turkish government making a carriage road running southward from the ancient city, and along side of the track I saw the same milestone with Roman names and numerals cut deep and handsomely in the granite column. It had been there ever since the days of the Cæsars. But the successors of the Cæsars could find no better use for the memorial stone than to take it as so much earth to raise the bank of the road.

One of the most important of the roads made by the Romans in Palestine passed through Capernaum from Damascus to the sea-coast at Akka, and there united with another line running southward to Jerusalem and Gaza. In many places the limestone blocks of these roads may be still seen where the Romans set them. Over this great national highway, pilgrims, merchants, caravans, soldiers, laborers, devotees, were continually passing. Capernaum was the halting-place for travellers whose journeys ex-

tended to the utmost boundaries of the Empire of the Cæsars. The words spoken by Jesus on the Mount of the Beatitudes, and in the synagogue of the city, and the mighty works done by him in its streets and houses, would soon be reported in Syria and Arabia, in Greece and Egypt, in Babylon and Rome, as well as in all Palestine.

And so in this bright and busy little city of Capernaum, at the head of the miniature sea of Galilee, Jesus took his stand where the stream of the world's travel passed between east and west, north and south, India and Italy, Scythia and Ethiopia. Speaking to instruct and putting forth his hand to help all that went and came, the divine Teacher presented himself as the Saviour of men, the Desired of all nations, the bond of union between all kindreds and tribes of the earth. He bound up the sacred precepts with all the peculiar seasons, aspects and occupations of the region round about the lake. He put forth his divine power to help and to save, Jew, Greek and Roman. He made himself known equally as the friend of the rich who were courted and envied for their wealth, and of the poor who were despised and oppressed for their poverty. He went when invited alike to the house of the Pharisee who thought himself too holy to touch the common people, and to the house of the publican who was hated as an apostate from Israel. He put forth his hand to touch the leper whom everybody shunned, and he spoke words of peace to the possessed whom everybody feared. His peculiar mode of teaching in the synagogue of

Capernaum, on the shore of the lake, and on the hillsides in sight of the city, has the stamp of reality in every illustration, and it has graven the leading features of the landscape upon the minds of millions who were never there to see it with their eyes.

The streets and houses of the city, which Jesus made his home when he began his public ministry, were undoubtedly such as we see in cities of the East at the present day. The modes of building have been changed very little for better or for worse, by the natives of Syria in two thousand years. Whoever in our time climbs up the steep stairway streets from the water's edge to the top of the low, rounded cape on which Jaffa stands, sees just about what Simon Peter saw when he went down to lodge with his namesake, the tanner, by the seaside. Whoever makes his way through arched passages and climbs up outside stone steps and enters a windowless house in Nablous, sees the kind of room in which Jesus and his disciples lodged when they stopped there two days on their way to Galilee. Two thousand years have made very little change in the aspect of Eastern towns, or the comforts of Eastern homes.

There is no trace of a street now where Capernaum once stood, but we may be very sure what kind of a street Jesus walked in when he came up from the fishing boats, or down from the hillsides to get a little rest in his own house, and the noisy multitude filled the way before and behind. The way was so narrow that many times he could touch the houses on either side with his

extended hands. A camel, kneeling under his burden, would take up the whole width of the road. A file of mounted soldiers marching would cause everybody else to turn into the side streets to make room for the military to pass. There was no pavement, no sidewalk, no shade trees, no windows in the walls to look into, or to look out of. The turns to right and left were short and sharp. The entrance of a narrow alley or side street was often arched with heavy stones and guarded with a gate. In the daytime it was cheerless and gloomy. In the night it looked like the door of a dungeon or the mouth of a pit. When Jesus rose up a great while before day, and went out from his home in the city to the hills that he might have a quiet morning hour with his Father, he was obliged to steal along these narrow, gloomy passages, under stone arches and through empty market-places, where the coming of a man from behind or before would sound like the stealthy steps of a thief or a murderer in the silence and the gloom. He moved about so much, early and late, when others were asleep, that the watchmen of the city were in danger of suspecting that his errands were not good. The howling of dogs about the streets and on the house-tops as if to give warning of deeds of plunder and of blood, the pitiful, mocking scream of jackals from the waste places, the cry of night birds on the wing over the lake, and the voices of fishermen plying their trade on the water, must have added loneliness to the hour when Jesus went out before the dawn to meet his Father on the hills.

If we take the modern Tell Hum for the site of Capernaum, we shall find that the ruins of the ancient city cover only about one-eighth of a square mile. But the streets were so narrow, so little ground was given up to open squares and gardens, the houses were so thickly set, and the shops were so small, that many thousand people could be crowded into so narrow a space. The house in which Jesus made his home must have been just like some that are still standing, roofless and tenantless, two miles north of Chorazin. The walls were two feet thick, built of rude masonry, or rough blocks of black basalt. The floor was the common ground, covered in part with mats and rugs, and in part trodden smooth and left bare. There was no chimney for the smoke to go out, no windows for the light to come in. On two or three sides of the one room there were openings in the walls large as a small pane of our glass, and they were not closed summer or winter. The one door was little more than two-thirds the height of a man.

The larger houses had lofty ceilings and spacious rooms. But the families of the common people, with whom Jesus lived, thought themselves well lodged if they had one room twenty feet square, and a ceiling high enough for a tall man to stand erect inside. The roof was made by stretching ten poplar or cypress poles from wall to wall, covering them with a cross layer of reeds and brushwood, and above all heaping on a flooring of earth a foot thick. The walls of houses in the

smaller villages were mostly made of mud, and they had to be repaired with a new coating of mud and white-wash every year, or the winter rains would soon wash them down even with the ground. A few days of sunshine would dry and crack the roof so that the first rain would run through, and muddy water would drip on everything inside of the house. Whenever the shower came, by night or by day, somebody must go up and smooth down the roof with a heavy stone roller to stop the leak.

In the houses of the common people, with whom Jesus made his home, the members of the family, male and female, old and young, parents and children, guests and friends, all slept in one room, and in the same clothing for the night which they had worn during the day. The harem of the Mohammedans and the Zenana of the Hindoos, did not exist in the houses where Christ was received as a guest. The bed for each sleeper was only a mat or a rug, such as any one could easily take up and walk. In the hot nights of summer there was little to choose between the damp, close air of the stone cabin inside, and the hot, fresh air and the fever in the falling dew, on the flat roof outside.

The floor was the seat of the family as they sat at meat, and the food was as simple as the furniture. A thin sheet of barley bread, baked brown in the public oven, two or three olives, dates or figs, sometimes a soft, bony fish from the lake, fried in oil, and the meal was done, whether it be morning, noon or night. It

made little difference whether it were called breakfast, dinner or supper, the meal was the same. Little time at table and no ceremony were needed by people who sat on the ground, ate with their fingers, drank water and served themselves.

With such houses and such modes of living it would be impossible to secure the quiet and the order, the neatness and the privacy, which we associate with home. To this day, in Eastern lands, the class of people with whom Jesus lodged at Capernaum know very little of the light and beauty, the comfort and peace, the social enjoyment, and the domestic seclusion which Christianity has brought to our Western homes. To appreciate his meekness, his patience, his divine discretion, we must consider that in him was the delicate perception, the refined sensibility, which demands order and beauty and courtesy, and yet he lived in such bare homes, he associated with such rude people, he carried the grace and purity of the highest culture into the stone cabins of fishermen by the lake and the mud houses of ploughmen and vine-dressers on the hills.

If the people of that land had received him to their hearts and homes, and started forth upon the way of life which he set before them in his own person, they would have reached long before this such a degree of refinement, social culture and enjoyment, as the world has never yet known. In his wise and gracious words, in his spotless and courageous life, in his quiet and unconquerable energy, Jesus set before the people of

Capernaum the elements of power to lift up the whole human race to a life higher than the highest have yet attained.

All great teachers and reformers prepare themselves for their public work by retirement and separation from the world. They awaken in themselves the deepest sympathy for others by first learning to be alone. From the quiet hours of study, meditation and prayer, come forth the great movements that cast down thrones and bring forth enslaved millions into light and liberty. And yet this greatest Reformer of all time could not have found one hour out of the twenty-four in the day for himself, so long as he lodged in the house, and kept himself within the circle of the family life in Capernaum. Whenever he was within doors he must be in the same room with the rest of the family. Whatever he said or did, it must be in the presence of others. When he would lie down to sleep at night, it must be upon a single mat, with many others upon the same floor. Whatever rudeness of manners, or voice, or speech there might be in the family, there was no escape from it for any one in the house day or night. The late and early hours of fishermen, the drawing up and launching of boats, the mending of nets and the clamor of the market, the outside watch of the weather and the inside watch of men waiting for day, must all enter into the life of the house where Jesus was meditating plans to revolutionize the world and redeem mankind.

Soon as it came to be known that the mighty Prophet

of Nazareth was in the house, there would be a continual succession of calls through the day and far into the night. Some would come to be cured of disease, some to pay sincere respect, some to make earnest inquiries about the way of life, some to ask idle questions, some to catch him in his words, some to sit down and look at him and say nothing. The customary salutations and questions of courtesy were long and wearisome, and half the night might easily be spent in nothing but the forms and phrases of coming and going. To lay the hand fervently upon the head and heart, to bow low and many times, to invoke all manner of blessing and to express all possible joy at meeting, to decline the seat of honor ten times, and finally take it, to be called lord and master, and to profess to be only servant and slave, to declare undying attachment and to kiss and embrace with the affection of parent and child—all came in the course of the common salutations and leave-takings of the callers that were constantly coming and going at the house where Jesus made his home. He must needs take time for them all, if he would not shock the common sense of propriety and turn the best people against him. He must be patient and quiet, however much the poor people crowded the room and trod upon each other to get near enough to stare at him, and give him no time to eat, to rest or to think. And they loaded the confined air with the odor of bodies that were never washed and of garments that were never laid aside night or day. He must be with them and bear with them through it all.

And then, if he grew weary of the stifling air and crowded room, and stepped out into the open street, it was impossible for him to get clear of the crowd. Whenever he made his appearance in any public place, the cry went in every direction, and the multitudes gathered and pressed upon him with eager curiosity. When he taught in the synagogue, the house was not large enough to hold the numbers that came to hear. When the meeting was over, the streets were so thronged wherever he went that it was only his look of command and of quiet majesty that awed the crowd and made way for him to pass. It was just so in proud and cultured Jerusalem as it was in rude Capernaum. When he appeared in the courts of the temple or the streets of the Holy City, his worst enemies said, the world has gone after him.

When he entered the market-place in any of the lake-side towns, the merchants forgot their goods and the buyers stopped their bargains to look and to listen to his words. When he turned into a friendly house to escape the crowd, the people filled the street so densely about the door that his own particular friends could not come near him for the press. When he went down to the seaside, fishermen left their nets to follow him. Rude, hard-handed laborers dropped their tools and their work, and joined the throng. The multitude from the town pressed so close upon him that he was obliged to step into a boat and speak to the throng on the shore. When he went from village to village through

the country, the people crowded the way before and behind, filling the air with their cries and with the dust of their trampling feet. When he went out into waste places to get a little rest, he was obliged to steal away alone and in the night, else thousands would follow after him until they had found out his retreat, and he would be obliged to speak to them in the desert or on the mountain side.

Knowing what we do of the home-life among the poor in Capernaum where Jesus dwelt, and of the throngs which pressed upon him whenever he appeared in public, we do not wonder that he tried many times to be alone. He rose up in the morning, a great while before day, stepped silently from the room without awaking the sleepers that were lying on the floor about him, went out into the open air and departed into some solitary place to pray. Many times, after a long and wearisome day in teaching, he dismissed his disciples, tore himself away from the multitude at the going down of the sun, and went away into the solitude of the mountains, and was there all night alone. Many times in the morning the people would crowd the narrow street before the door of his house, early, while it was yet dark, hoping to see him when he came out and follow his step all day; and then they would find that he had disappeared in the night, and nobody could tell where he had gone. Then they would go out in all directions, and climb the hillsides before sunrise in search of him, and they would find him in some solitary place, apart from the paths and homes

of men, where he had been spending the hours of the night alone in prayer unto his Father, and girding himself with new strength for toil when the day should come.

He must needs go out to waste places among the hills to be alone, because there was no privacy in the house, no separate room for guests or for members of the family. During the waking hours of the day and the night he must talk all the time. He must be watched and stared at and listened to by rude and eager and idle people every moment. Wherever he went the most wretched and pitiable creatures cried after him. The blind, the deaf, and the dumb were thrust in his way. The lame, the paralyzed, and the lunatic blocked up the road and besought his help. To have any time for rest and for rallying his overtaxed mind and heart, he must go away to the solitude of the hills, he must be alone all night with his Father.

There was no monastic element in his character, no morbid shrinking from society. He did not hide himself from the world to escape its evil. He went into solitude only that he might come forth with deeper sympathy for the suffering and the sinning, and with renewed strength to pity and to save. No heart was ever so full of pity as his. No one ever felt so deeply for the woes and afflictions of others as he. No one ever did so much to beautify home, to strengthen the bonds of society, to make one brotherhood of the whole human race. When he sought to be alone, it was only to gird himself with

strength for work, and to take the suffering and the sinning more deeply and tenderly to his heart.

City life in Capernaum where Jesus made his home was very different from city life in one of the great centres of modern wealth, refinement and civilization. There were no broad streets with brilliant carriages flashing along the pavement, and elegant mansions with carved doors and bright windows stretching away for miles on either side. There were no crowds of quiet, well-dressed, well-behaved people, coming and going along broad, clean side-walks, looking in through crystal glass upon store-houses filled with all manner of beautiful things in art and merchandise. There were no parks or public gardens, with happy children playing under the shade of old trees or among flowers, with birds and bright fountains singing in the sun. There were no churches with lofty roof and windowed walls and mighty organ pouring forth its many-voiced music in unison with the voices of living worshippers. There were no libraries or schools or colleges or galleries of art, no assemblies of old and young listening to the eloquent and the wise, and learning from their lips the lessons of history, of science and social culture.

Jesus at Capernaum began the great work of lifting up the whole human race to a higher and better life with no aid from art or science or literature, no support from wealth or civil power or social advantages. He began with men—men rude and unlettered and unknown, loud-voiced in speech, and noisy in work—men fierce in

anger, quick in quarrel, implacable in revenge. He lived with them in their houses, sailed with them in their boats, walked with them in their journeys, ate with them from the same dish, slept with them on the same floor. He began his mighty work in a little, low-bred city, with people who lived in one-roomed stone cabins, and wore one garment, sleeping and waking, through all the year, who toiled all night in fishing or traded all day in the market, and who were without wealth, without office, without honor in the world. And yet he worked so wisely that he made these men the masters of the world, the heralds of light and liberty to all ages, all nations.

Jesus began his work in Capernaum by calling man by man, one at a time and by name. He assumed that the world wants first of all and most of all the right character in individual men. All wealth and power, all arts and sciences, all culture and social refinement will follow as a consequence when once men are brought into agreement with the laws of righteousness, the reality of things, the will of God. So he took a few fishermen who were least hampered by false theories in philosophy, and false restrictions in society, and he entered into their lowly life that he might lift them up to the higher life of harmony with God and harmony with all the laws and forces that rule over man's being and destiny, now and forever. Capernaum was a good place to begin such a work, because home-life there was so plain, the people with whom Jesus

lived were so poor, and the coming of a Teacher like him was so great an event. And it was a good place to begin a world-wide movement, because it lay right along side of the world's travel and traffic. When once the chosen fishermen had caught the spirit and power of their Master, and they went forth to witness for him with the nations, they did not need to travel far to be brought face to face with the great powers of the earth.

Capernaum, compared with the great capitals of the world, Thebes, Babylon, Nineveh, Rome, was only a little hamlet, standing beside a lake which was but a handbreadth compared with the great sea. Yet here comes the divine Builder to lay the foundations of the city of God, that shall grow in greatness and beauty throughout all ages and outlast all time. In this little town that has no history, beside this miniature sea that has no commerce, the Prince of life comes to set up an everlasting kingdom, and to establish a dominion that shall endure throughout all generations. He takes a stone cabin for his palace, the bare hillside for his throne, unlettered fishermen for his prime ministers, the word of truth for his sword, and the thanks of the poor for his pay, and so he begins the conquest of the world. The houses of the city where he dwelt are levelled with the shore. The paths where he walked can no longer be traced. In the whole compass of the lake there is no monument of his mighty works, no memorial of his life. And yet his kingdom to-day is

the mightiest of all the powers in the earth, and all opposing powers are constantly yielding to its sway. And this because Christ sets up his throne in the hearts of men, and so conquers the world by love.

In this little city of Capernaum, Jesus, from the smaller and more retired town of Nazareth, takes the great world to his heart. He begins a work which is to go on, increasing in greatness and power, until it masters the mind, and wins the heart and controls the wealth of all nations. He speaks words which shall be translated into all human languages, he lays down principles of action which shall control all human conduct, he assumes the office of a Teacher whose sayings shall be supreme authority for all time. And this great expansion of the work begun by Jesus in Capernaum is not a growth unforeseen or unintended by him. Everything that he says and does in this little city is in the character of one who means to master the world, and who feels that he has the right and power to do so. The Cæsars know nothing about him. The philosophers have not heard his name. The learned of his own nation, the populace of his own town, despise him.

And there he is, surrounded by a rude, turbulent, passionate people. They crowd upon him, stare at him, cry after him in their rough way, until his life becomes a weariness to him and he is obliged to steal away by night and hide himself among the hills to get a little rest. And yet he drops into their ears words which shall become the highest law of action to the noblest

minds. On the face of all the earth there was no work so mighty and far-reaching as that which Jesus was doing while his home was in one of the damp, dark, stone cabins of Capernaum.

The new life, which the old worn-out world was waiting for, and which was to beautify and to bless all human homes, was to start from this little stone-built town where families lived in one room, and the divine Teacher accepted such entertainment as they had to give. The beautiful statues, the magnificent temples, the triumphal arches of Athens and Corinth and Ephesus and Rome looked down upon dark and wretched homes, upon lying and licentious people, and upon the daily practice of things that the sun should never see and the night should never hide. Jesus begins a new and higher civilization, in a city that has no theatres, no statues, no works of art, no monuments of mighty deeds done in war or mighty words spoken in senates or at the head of armies. From that unknown house which he made his home and of which no stone is left standing, Jesus sends out fishermen for his messengers and publicans for his preachers, and he commissions them to establish a kingdom that shall make sovereigns of slaves and princes of common people. And they fulfil their high commission with such success that a new history for the world takes its date from the beginning of their work. The word of life spoken by their lips has been taken by others and passed on from land to land and from age to age, until now it is acknowledged by all to be

the mightiest word in the world. And everywhere as it goes it brings light into dark homes, it kindles hope in despairing hearts and it gives the victory over death.

This word of Jesus which goes forth from the little city of Capernaum has proved itself to be the most fruitful source of progress in society, of refinement in manners, of purity in art, of equity in law, of advance in knowledge, and of mastery over the powers of nature. In the word of this wonderful Teacher, whose home is by the seaside, lie hidden, ready to come forth when sought, all the riches of wisdom, all the graces of culture, all the adornments of society, for all nations, all ages. Millions have beautiful homes now because Jesus lived in the dark one-roomed home at Capernaum, and there planted the seed of the tree of life whose branches are filling the earth, and whose leaves are healing the nations. The life in the word of Jesus makes everything live. Wherever it finds a welcome the city is more orderly and healthful, the country more beautiful and productive, the fireside more cheery and inviting, and all the rights of men are sacred, all the bonds of humanity are blessed.

God speed the coming of the day when the word that went forth of old, from the dark home in Capernaum, shall fill the homes of a thousand millions with light. God speed the coming of the day when the utterance of the word of Jesus upon the lips of men shall be loud enough for all the nations to hear and sweet enough to draw all hearts to him.

BY THE SEA.

The Seaside.

The same day went Jesus out of the house ana sat by the seaside.—MATT. xiii. 1.

V.

THE SEASIDE.

THE little sea of Galilee fills the bed of a deep, rocky cleft among highlands. The unscientific observer, looking down from the rim of the basin upon the placid water and the silent shore, has the impression that the rift must have been made by some awful force strong enough to rend the rocky crust of the globe. Inspired by the associations of the land and catching the spirit of the ancient prophets, he is inclined to speak in the language of oriental metaphor and to say that, in old time, the Most High came down and stood upon the earth, and the everlasting mountains were scattered, and the perpetual hills did bow, and the valleys were cleft asunder beneath his step. Volcanic fires flamed up from beneath, the hills melted like wax, and the molten lava stream poured over the chalky heights in black torrents, and the cloud of the earth's great agony covered the heavens and darkened the sun. When the mighty convulsion passed and the scattered hills rested from the shock, they came not back to their old place, but they left a broad basin, sunk deep between rocky heights for the sea of life, and they left also a narrower and deeper furrow, for the river ploughed all the way southward through the highlands to the sea of death.

The waters from the neighboring hills and from the distant fountains of Dan, and Hermon, and Lebanon have flowed down and filled the hollow left by the parted heights. And so the smooth sea lies in the mouth of the pit which the earthquake opened, and fishermen cast their nets where volcanic fires once flamed. The steam rising from hot and sulphurous fountains which flow across the pebbly beach below Tiberias, and the warm current coming out of the hills a little way from Capernaum, show that the fires are still burning beneath. The power that drove the mountains asunder and cleft the valleys in the old time is still imprisoned in the deep places of the earth. It moved only a little and for a moment forty years ago like a giant uneasy, turning in his slumber, and the hills trembled and half the inhabitants of Safed and Tiberias were buried beneath the ruin of their own houses.

The little lake looks less in size than it really is, because it lies so low between the parted hills and because the encompassing heights seem to be brought nearer to each other by the strange deceptiveness of distances in Eastern lands. It looked to me like an hour's row from the shore of Gennesaret to Gergesa, on the eastern side. But our six Arab boatmen pulled hard for three times as long before we could reach the point proposed. I thought we could compass the whole line of coast named in the gospel story before sunset. But it was sixteen hours from the time of starting and late at night before we reached our tent at Tiberias. For a while indeed

the wind was contrary, and the men toiled hard in rowing, making little progress and ready to give up in despair. But all the while it seemed that we had but a little way to go, and I wondered that it need take so long.

When the sky is clear and the sun is high at noon, and the scathed and furrowed cliffs cast no shadows upon the still surface of the water, the whole landscape about the lake has a blasted and desolate expression, as if lying under the spell of some awful doom. It seems to be mourning for the loss of a glory that has passed away and left no monument to tell of its greatness, and no tomb to keep its ashes. The oppressive silence recalls the time when the whole region was filled with voices. The houseless and homeless aspect of the view in every direction is contrasted in the mind of the traveller with the same scene when fair cities crowned the hilltops, and busy thousands dwelt on the shore, and toiled on the sea. And it often seems to him as if some awful voice had hushed all the sounds of life and had said to the living—"Go out hence and return no more." Such impression is made upon the sensitive student of sacred history by the silence of noon and the deeper silence of night on the sea of Galilee.

The landscape about the lake appears at its best when the day breaks, with the glory of an eastern dawn over the hills of Bashan, or the evening casts its purple shadow from Tabor and the mount of the Beatitudes, or a sudden blast rushes down through the wild gorges

of the high table-lands, and lashes the whole surface of the water into snow-white foam. Once I saw the morning go forth from its eastern chambers, "Such as in highest heaven, arrayed in gold imperial." The snowy heights of Hermon on the north shone like some great altar-flame, burning unto the midst of heaven, and lifting up to God the homage of the hills. The nearer heights passed in rapid succession from crimson to gold, and from purple to sombre gray and softened blue. For an hour the lights and shadows changed every moment, and birds broke forth in song as the grand panorama unrolled from hill to hill, and every view was reflected from the glassy surface of the sea.

Once I saw a thin white mist resting motionless for hours over Tabor and Tiberias and Hattin, while the eastern shore was all bright and the sea all calm. Suddenly, as if some word of command had been given to the winds, the cloud advanced along its whole front, and the storm came down on the lake with such fury that our boatmen cried out in despair, "We are killed, we are killed." With great effort and many exclamations of fear and distress, they drove our rude craft into a sheltered cove at the northeastern corner of the lake, near where the disciples started on their memorable night voyage at the command of Jesus. When we stepped upon the beach, we found it hard to walk in the face of the strong wind. The waves beat upon the shore with a shock like the waves of the ocean. Our

boatmen covered themselves with their goats'-hair mantles, and crouched behind a bank of black sand, waiting for the wind to cease.

Travellers, who only ride down from the hills of Galilee, and spend a hot and weary day in traversing the pebbly beach, gazing upon the glimmering sand, the glassy waters, and the brown shore, are apt to pronounce the whole scene desolate, monotonous and uninteresting. They contrast it with lakes where the surrounding hills are covered with green woods, the shores are set with bright houses and trim gardens, and the water is alive with the flutter of sails, the stroke of oars, and the steam of engines, and they say that nothing but its sacred associations can draw one to the sea of Galilee. But let them survey the scene from different points of view, let them look upon the lake from the hills, and upon the hills from the lake, let them take time to witness the changes of calm and storm, morning and evening, noon and night, and they will never tire in talking of its beauty.

The whole region has greatly changed since Jesus came down from Nazareth to make his new home in Capernaum. Then the lake was alive with a fleet of four thousand boats. At all hours of the day and far into the night, they might be seen scudding before the wind, moving slow with laboring oars, or resting in the calm with drooping sails. The waving line of the shore was set with bright little cities, whose whited houses were reflected in the mirror of the lake, and the effect

of the whole picture was increased by the setting in the brown framework of the hills.

The whole country about the lake in its present deserted condition looks as if there must be some lurking danger to guard against every moment, either from malaria in the air, or from robbers lying in wait to plunder and destroy, or from some mysterious and awful doom that forbids the land to be inhabited. The traveller involuntarily falls into the habit of watching against surprise, as he rides up and down the hillsides, and makes his way cautiously through beds of thistles and thickets of oleander along the shore. And his fears are confirmed when he sees a naked fisherman start up suddenly from behind a bush, or a fierce-looking Arab dogging his steps wherever he goes.

But in the time of Christ the northern and western side of the lake was all one bright and busy home of people who were all neighbors, and who could lodge every night in the year at a different town and always with friends. Villages of houses, whited to look pretty, whether of stone or earth, covered the distant heights. Hamlets clustered on the terraced slopes and at the head of valleys looking toward the lake. The sower cast his seed into all the good ground of the narrow plain, and the vintager trained his vines wherever earth enough could be found to hold the root on the sunny cliffs and ledges. Flowers of the brightest hue, fruits of the richest taste, trees of the greenest leaf and the deepest shade grew in profusion, where now thorns and

thistles usurp the ground or the storms of centuries have washed down the terraces and left nothing but the bare rock. Palms waved their feathery branches, balsams perfumed the air, olive orchards rustled like a silvery sea in the morning light, dark green fig-leaves covered the nakedness of the rocks, wine cheered the marriage feast, water gushed from living fountains, myrtles and cypresses murmured the requiem for the dead, where now the sun looks upon a desolate land by day and the wakeful traveller hears the jackall's cry by night.

The deep depression of the lake, six hundred feet below the sea, acted upon the enclosed air like some vast conservatory, keeping up a tropical temperature through most of the year. Flowers blossomed and fruits ripened on the level of the shore, while snow lay in sight on the hills to the north. The water of the lake was fresh and pure, except for a little space where sulphur springs flowed in from the shore. The people boasted of its sweetness and coolness as much as the Egyptians boast of the Nile. The air in the bed of the rocky basin was mild and genial, while shepherds were shivering with cold on the neighboring heights and vine-dressers were anxious lest their early buds should be chilled. Three bright little streams kept flowing across Gennesaret while the thirsty flocks were wandering from valley to valley in search of water among the hills. The narrow band of cultivated ground, lying between the pebbly beach and the base of the cliffs all round the

lake, was kept green while the drought dried up the pasture lands and seared the young barley on the hill-sides of Galilee. The fountain that burst forth close by Capernaum was strong enough to supply an artificial water-course that encompassed the whole land of Gennesaret and made it an ever blooming garden. Hence some find the name to mean variously, Prince's garden, vale of flowers, Paradise.

If I had never seen the sea of Galilee except as I saw it for the first time in the month of March, in a cold and backward season, I should say, as some do, that the view from the water and the shore is "bare and monotonous," and that there is nothing in the natural features of the country to compensate for the loss of towns and people in lighting up the landscape. But when I saw it again, years afterwards and later in the season, the dreary aspect was all gone. The narrow plains and the steep hill-sides were all green with springing grass and luxuriant grain, and everything had the expression of life and beauty. I no longer looked upon it as a land lying under the curse of barrenness and desolation. The only thing wanting to bring back the busy scene on which Jesus looked was the gardens and the vineyards, the towns and the people, the fishermen and the boats.

The morning came with all the glory which shone on the earth when Jesus spoke to gathered thousands on the grassy slope of the hills. The night brooded on the mountains, and the silent stars were reflected in the silent water just as when Jesus sat by the seaside and

the fishermen rested from their toil to hear him speak at the going down of the sun. If I could have forgotten the history of the olden time, if I could have banished from my mind all visions of a glory that had passed away, I should have had little thought of dreariness and desolation. I should have said that it was a most varied and living landscape, such as one might travel many miles to see. But we cannot separate the scene from the history. When the busy past comes back to mind and we see about us nothing but a land emptied of its inhabitants, then the springing grass and the blooming flowers seem as if they were sent in pity to beautify the dead, like the ivy covering the gaps in the crumbling wall, like the cypress and the myrtle green in the place of graves.

The time that Jesus made his home in Capernaum is divided into nine periods of sojourn in the city and nine of missionary excursions through the neighboring towns and districts. Four times we find him teaching by the lakeside, three times in the synagogue, once on the mount in sight of the city, and always speaking the words of eternal life in such way that the common people heard him gladly. Without haste, without rest, he went and came up and down the steep paths of the hills, seeking people where he could find them, in town or country, in field or vineyard, in house or fishing-boat. He entered into hamlets and villages, hungry and wanting food, weary and wanting rest, yet always doing the work which his Father had given him to do. He

crossed and recrossed the lake in storm and sunshine, by night and by day. He dined and lodged, he talked and travelled with rich and poor, with learned and ignorant, and he made himself equally familiar with all the interests and occupations of men. Nobody thought himself too poor to invite the mighty Prophet of Nazareth to be his guest. Nobody ever gave the invitation and was turned coldly away.

By his daily life and mighty works and divine instructions, Jesus made the sea of Galilee in the minds of his followers next in sacredness to that crystal sea of heaven on which the blessed walk and sing to the harps of God. The silent shore, the surrounding hills, the overarching sky are hallowed in the hearts of all Christians of every nation and for all succeeding time. It is both our duty and our privilege, so far as we can, to revive the scenes in the midst of which Jesus lived and walked with men. In imagination we may reverently and lovingly rebuild Capernaum, and recall the busy thousands that walked its narrow streets, and ploughed its stony fields, and manned its boats on the lake. We may go out in the morning and stand on the shore, while the mist goes up with the dawn, and the day comes over the eastern hills clad in purple and gold. We may go out at evening, when the world is still and dim, and the lake sleeps without a ripple on its face and the boats are moored along the shore, and the white cities are veiled in shadows that make them more beautiful than when seen in the glaring light of noon. We may

set before our imagination the living Master as the one most human, most familiar, most majestic personage in all this busy scene of restored life and action. Thus we shall give reality to our faith in Jesus as the one most actual and genuine character in all history. Thus we shall bring the divine and human into closer relations with each other. Thus we shall make it easier to believe that, even now, the humblest home may have the Son of God for a guest, and the lowliest occupation may receive his help and blessing.

Let us go down to the lakeside and listen, while Jesus speaks to the fishermen on the shore. It is the morning hour, and the flush of dawn is kindling and rising higher and higher beyond the level wall of the eastern mountains. The hills, the winding shore, the white towns, the oak woods of Tabor and the barren heights of Bashan rise to view with increasing clearness every moment, and overhead, the stars, that hung all night like crystal lamps from the blue dome of the sky, go out one by one in the coming glory of the full day. The still surface of the lake lies like a dark mirror of burnished steel encased in its high frame-work of hills, receiving and reflecting the rapid changes of light and shade from night to morning. The porticos and palaces of the Roman town of Tiberias stand out facing the east in bright contrast with the brown, earth-built villages farther back on the hills, and the plain, square-built block houses of the cities along the northern shore of the lake. Olives and fig-trees and vines grow so

thickly as to hide the rough walls of the terraces on which they are planted, and so the mountains on the west present a face of living green for the morning sun to look upon, in contrast with the shaded and bare wall on the east. The birds of the air break the silence first with a solitary note, then with a prelude from a score of leading singers, and then with a swelling chorus of voices that fill the whole vault of heaven.

And now the dawn is half-way up the east, and the growing light reveals a person of calm and thoughtful aspect, walking alone upon the narrow strand. There is a deep sadness in his face, as if he carried a world of sorrow upon his heart, and yet his look is so gentle and winning that the most afflicted would turn to him for sympathy, and little children would run to him at his call, and cling to his hand. His dress is that of the common people, and his hands show the signs of toil. And yet his silent bearing is that of one born to command, and the grace of every movement betrays the majesty of a king. His glance is quick and penetrating, yet not severe; his step is light and easy, as if scarcely resting upon the ground; his manner such as to repel the approach of the rude, yet to encourage the timid and the distrustful; his whole appearance that of one lifted up and living apart from men, and yet more human than humanity itself and taking the whole world to his heart.

It is Jesus himself. He has risen up a great while before the day and gone down to the lakeside in the cool air of the morning to have a quiet hour for meditation

and prayer. The houses and the mode of lodging at night among the poor people with whom he lives do not give him opportunity for retirement, and he must needs anticipate the day and go out into desert places or down to the seaside, if he would be alone with his Father. And hence we find him at this early hour walking upon the gravelly beach alone. What time he rose and stepped silently from among the sleepers on the floor of the house where he lodged, how long he has been walking up and down the beach, nobody knows. But the peace of the silent heaven is in his face and the strength of the eternal hills is in his soul. If the day shall bring excitement and tumult among the people and tempest on the sea, it will not break the divine calm in which he carries on his mighty work, and in which is the hiding of his power over passionate men.

The fishermen are beginning to gather in from their night's toil on the lake, and the busy multitudes are astir in the town. There is no sound of wheels rattling over the stony street, no roar of cars or engines thundering along the iron track, no ringing of bells to proclaim the morning hour. But the voices of men are loud and harsh, and all shout and scream and talk together. Some cry from housetops and some from the street. Some shout from the hills to men in boats on the sea. Some pass messages from voice to voice to the next town, and get answers back in less time than it would take the bird to fly. The loud voices of men in the morning make up for the silence of the night, and sea and shore become a Babel of tongues.

In Palestine everybody rose up not indeed a great while before the day, as Jesus often did, but yet early, and before the sun. The morning was given to toil, the noon to rest, the evening to conversation, the night to sleep. The pilgrim was on the road and the ploughman was in the field before the sunrise was red on the hills. The morning song of the bird was not finished before the task of the day was well begun and half done. And now in Capernaum travellers are starting on their journey, laborers are going out to work in the fields and vineyards, merchantmen are clamoring at their bargains, women are chattering with merry voices on their way to the fountains and the lakeside to bring water, shepherds are leading forth their flocks on the hills and fishermen are gathering upon the shore.

Jesus is no longer alone. The toilers upon the sea signal to each other that the Prophet of Nazareth may be seen on the shore in the morning light, and strong-handed oarsmen are pulling hard to be the first in landing at the spot where Jesus stands. Steersmen from every direction head the same way, and the water is alive with the stroke of oars and the wake of boats. The multitudes, who had followed Jesus from the hill-country the day before and had lodged in the town over night, have learned the place of his morning walk and are hurrying down to the beach, carrying with them as many more from the streets of Capernaum.

The surging crowd gather closer and closer upon Jesus, until he is pressed down to the water's edge.

They are good-natured, but eager and noisy, and little inclined to heed the word that calls for silence and self-restraint. At last he is compelled to request one of the fishermen to receive him into his boat and thrust out a little from the land, that the people may no longer tread upon each other in the endeavor to approach him, and that they may the better give quiet attention to his words. And so he sits in the bow of the rocking boat teaching the multitude that stand or recline and listen on the land. Calm, patient, condescending, he bears with their rudeness, he pities their ignorance, he speaks to them as man never spake. Gradually, as they come under the impress of his gentle yet penetrating glance, and they catch the tone of his persuasive yet commanding voice, they cease from their boisterous outcries, they quiet down into order and attention. Some listen from idle curiosity, some with captious criticism or cold reserve, some with the longing of the thirsty for living waters, and all with wonder at the wisdom and grace, the sweetness and the power of the words from Jesus' lips.

In all the wide world of wealth and learning, and art and power, it would be in vain to look for a scene as impressive, as significant as this. The Son of God, the King of heaven, the Prince of the armies of light, comes upon a mission of truth and mercy for the redemption of nations; he comes to begin a new era in history and to lift up the whole human race to a complete and glorious life, and he passes by the schools of philosophy,

the courts of kings and the camp of the conqueror. He goes down to the lakeside in the early morning to deliver his divine message to peasants and fishermen. It is no set occasion. No word has been sent out to gather the people to meet the king and prepare for his coming. He is among them as a wayfarer stopping for the night, and thankful for a place to lay his head. He sits upon the swaying seat of the fisherman's boat, talking to the rude and staring crowd on the shore, when he might sit upon the throne of heaven and receive the homage of archangels.

And in this humble scene, on the shore of the Galilean lake, we find the most momentous crisis in human destiny. Under the calm deportment of this unpretending Teacher, who came down from the hills of despised Nazareth, is treasured up the germ of revolutions and conquests, heroisms and sacrifices which shall make a new history for the world. Hereafter it will be a greater thing to live and bear a part in the new life which he gives to men. With his gentle words there shall go forth a power to stir and shake the nations, as the lake is roused and ploughed into foam by the sudden blast from the highlands of Bashan. The conquests of Cæsar and Alexander, the decrees of the Roman Senate, the founding of Athens and Rome and Alexandria, were events of trifling importance in the world's history, compared with the work which Jesus was doing, when he taught the multitudes on the shore of the lake and on the hill-sides of Galilee. A call to the throne of the

mightiest empire on earth were not so honorable or eventful as the call which Jesus gave to Peter and James, and John and Andrew, when he commanded them to forsake their nets and follow him.

The wise and cautious citizens of Capernaum, who saw the fishermen forsake all at the word of Jesus, undoubtedly thought them foolish, and said among themselves that they would soon be back again with shame and loss at their old trade. It does not require the spirit of prophecy in us to say, that great things will come from this quiet, unpromising call. These unlettered peasants of Galilee shall fulfil their divine commission with a wisdom and an energy correspondent to its greatness. They shall acquire an unrivalled mastery over the cultivated mind of the world. They shall be quoted as supreme authority in schools and colleges, at the head of armies, and in the councils of nations. They shall start revolutions in faith and opinion, before which the mighty fabric of old superstition shall be cast down, and the profound theories of philosophers shall be changed to fables. They shall be more honored, and their lives and instructions shall be studied more earnestly, the higher the world rises in intellectual and moral cultivation.

The names of these fishermen shall be carved upon columns, and temples, and statues, and arches; they shall be given to mountains, and rivers, and islands, all round the earth; they shall be borne by uncounted millions yet unborn. They shall be given to cities, and streets, and

hospitals, to ships on the sea, and to sanctuaries on the land, to the homes of the living, and the tombs of the dead. They shall be repeated as words of peace, and they shall be shouted as the battle-cry of hosts. These unlettered men, who hear the call of Jesus by the sea of Galilee, shall live without home and without inheritance among their own people, and they shall go out as wanderers on the face of the earth. But in after time, they shall be named as the patrons of the rich and the mighty, the defenders of the poor and needy, and the keepers of the keys of the kingdom of heaven.

Such great and far-reaching consequences shall flow from words which Jesus speaks to a company of poor, tired, hungry, disappointed fishermen, on the shore of the sea of Galilee. So truly is it one of the great hours of destiny for the world when Jesus says to those wondering and awestruck men, "Follow me." Such unspeakable power, such immortal glory is conferred upon even common men when they forget everything else and give themselves heart and soul to the work which God calls them to do.

We have only to listen to the words of Jesus as he speaks by the seaside, and we shall be able to clothe the most striking features of the scene with living reality. Before him, in full sight, as he looks toward the people on the shore, are the cultivated slopes and hollows of the hills on the north of the lake, and farther round to the left, and still in sight, is the more fertile and highly cultivated plain of Gennesaret. The un-

fenced fields on the plain are divided for the most part only by narrow foot-paths, with here and there a ragged cactus hedge, for the better protection of the gardens and the villages. The cultivated spaces on the hills, farther back in the country, are bounded with stones gathered out from the fields and piled up in rude heaps or walls, and watch-towers higher than the houses.

At this season of the year, in the tropical temperature on the depressed level of the lake, the sower and the reaper may be seen scattering seed and gathering grain of different kinds side by side. On the slopes of the hills beyond are shelving rocks, where the thin earth, moistened by the early rain, catches the first warmth of spring, and shoots up the most rapid growth. When the rains cease, and the sun shines all day from a cloudless sky, the tender blades of grass and grain wither away because they have no deepness of earth. Everywhere along the pathways, in the neglected corners of the fields, and up the hill-sides, in the chinks of the rocks, as well in the rich soil of the plain, may be seen clumps of thorns, growing so thickly as to choke all other vegetation. The thorns are always planted, and they spring up without cultivation, and they are so tenacious of life that everything else may be killed in the vain attempt to destroy them. The birds of the air are sporting and foraging for their morning meal in every direction. They are so many that they come in clouds; they are so tame that they will almost pick the seed from the sower's hand, and they care little for the cries and

slings of watchmen, who are set upon towers and under booths to fray them away. There are no solitary farm houses scattered through the cultivated lands, and giving the husbandman a home in the midst of his fields. The sower, the reaper, the ploughman, the vintager, must all go forth from the town to their daily tasks.

All this can be seen by the multitude from the lake-side in the clear light of the morning when Jesus takes up his parable and says, "A sower went forth to sow." They have seen it done a thousand times, they have done it themselves. The birds coming in clouds and alighting upon the paths through the unfenced fields, where some of the sower's seed would always fall, the thin, bare earth of the stony places already parched and scorched by the advancing season, the stubborn thorns choking all useful vegetation, and the good ground bringing forth a hundred-fold for the reaper's hand, are all in sight while the divine Teacher employs these natural similitudes in setting forth the reception of his word in the human heart. And he so binds up the great truths of the heavenly kingdom with these earthly things that the sun and the rain, the seasons and the harvests, the seed of the sower and the sheaves of the reaper will continue to repeat his sacred lessons to the susceptible heart so long as the world shall stand.

This word of Jesus still lives, and it tells us that nature and revelation speak with one voice and teach the same truth. When preachers are silent and sanctuaries are shut and faithful example fails, then comes the divine

voice speaking through all times and seasons, and saying to busy men along all the highways of life: Let not your hearts be like the hard-beaten track of the barren and dusty road, insensible as the pavement of the trodden street, open for the free passage of all the world's burdens and business, but receiving the precious seed of the divine word only to let it be stolen away by the first plunderer or tempter that passes. Be not like the thin earth upon the rock, receiving the message of life with sudden joy, burning with zeal to proclaim the new hope, rebuking the thoughtful and the considerate for coldness and delay, and yet all withered and lifeless under the increasing heat of trial and temptation which is sent only to fit the heart to bring forth fruit unto perfection. Be not like the neglected borders and corners of the field, so overgrown with thorny cares and anxieties, with earthly pleasures and ambitions, that the things of the heavenly kingdom can find no place in the heart. The seed of the divine word wants only an honest and believing heart, a reasonable and right judging mind. In that good ground it is sure to bring forth fruit unto eternal life. Not only a hundred, but infinite fold shall be the harvest of riches and honor, of strength and joy, springing from a faithful reception of Christ's word by the least and lowest of the sons of men.

The whole western shore of the lake is gilded all over with the yellow blossoms of a plant that grows by cultivation in the gardens, springs up unbidden among the wheat and barley, lines the pathways among the hills,

and sheds its pungent fragrance on the air at this season of the year through the whole of Galilee. It is the wild mustard, growing so high above all kinds of grass and grain as to be called a tree. I have ridden for miles on the plains of Akka and Jezreel and Sharon with the yellow blossoms about me as high as my head on horseback, and so thick as to make the plain seem like a golden sea in the noonday light. Thousands of birds were sporting on the wing and alighting in the branches. Laborers crouched under its shadow, and travellers sought the same shelter from the heat when resting on their journey. It springs from a seed so small as to be taken in common speech as the representative of the least of anything, and it grows with irrepressible vitality all over the land.

All this is before the eye and familiar to the daily observation of the multitudes sitting on the land and listening while Jesus speaks from the boat and says: The kingdom of heaven is like to a grain of mustard seed. In such vivid and common forms does the great Teacher lodge in their wondering minds the germ of the great truth that the work begun by him in so simple a manner on the shore of that quiet lake shall live and grow until it fills the whole earth. This little fiery, pungent seed, which gives forth its essence the more it is beaten and bruised and trodden upon, and which grows on every stony hill-side and in every fertile valley, in spite of all efforts to destroy it, shall help these poor Galilean fishermen to understand the quickening power and the

unconquerable life of the truth which is to go forth from the lips of Jesus and set up a kingdom which shall embrace all nations and endure throughout all generations.

That fishing boat from which Jesus speaks shall be more honored in the minds of millions than the mightiest throne of earth. The peasant garb which Jesus wears shall be more glorious than the robe of kings. The humble fishermen whom he makes his ambassadors and ministers shall be more honored in the world's history than princes and heroes. The dominion which begins with the small seed corn of the divine word shall grow in greatness and in glory until all the dominions of the earth become subject to its power and all the principalities of heaven rejoice in its triumph. This promised unity of nations, which the statesmen and philosophers of the world could never comprehend, this mighty moral revolution, which is to make all other changes and conflicts the instrumentalities of its power and the means of its advance, is the one great germinal truth, planted by Jesus himself on the shores of the sea of Galilee when teaching the multitude from a fishing boat. The fruit of that seed has already given life to millions, and it is destined to fill the earth with the abundance of peace and salvation.

This whole region has been repeatedly overrun and devastated by invading armies and by roving bands of lawless men whose sole object is to plunder and destroy. From the days of Abraham, and Joshua, and David, the whole country around the lake has been subject to every

change and calamity which can make life and property insecure. Roving tribes have robbed caravans, peasants have robbed merchants and travellers, princes have robbed peasants, rulers have robbed princes, conquerors have robbed all alike. Changes in the governing power have been frequent and liable to occur at any time, and whatever the change, the holders of property must always suffer. For centuries it has been the study of the people to save property from robbery and extortion, taxes and conscription. It has become a maxim of prudence and foresight with the rich that a third of one's property should be hidden in the earth for safekeeping.

This has been the feeling and the custom of the country for more than a thousand years. In many cases the place of concealment has been forgotten or lost through the sudden death, imprisonment or exile of the only one who knew the secret. And so the impression is everywhere entertained that immense sums of money may lie buried in any man's field or garden, and there may be no living owner to claim it. If found, the finder may claim to be the rightful owner, or he may conceal the discovery and enjoy his good fortune for life. Every one has heard tales of great riches suddenly acquired by the finding of treasures hidden in the earth. Treasure-seeking has been taken up as a profession, to the neglect of the regular pursuits of honorable industry. Some go about the country pretending to the art of detecting the place where money has been concealed. Leagues have been made with the supposed evil powers of the nether

world; charms, spells and incantations, magic divination and sorcery have been used to induce the supposed ghostly guardian of hidden treasures to reveal the place of its concealment and permit it to be carried away. Men have fainted or become frantic with excitement upon discovering a trifling sum, simply because they took that as a sure sign that vast riches would soon be found. The peasant in the fields, the householder in his garden, the traveller by the wayside, and the shepherd watching his flock, are all alive to the stories of treasure-seekers, and all cherish the dream that possibly some time they may light upon great riches hidden in the earth. All over Galilee, men can be easily found in any number to dig all night in desperate earnestness, and with hushed voices and bated breath and awful secrecy, in the bare hope that some idle tale or mischievous invention of professional treasure detectors may prove true.

Jesus speaks to men upon whose excitable imaginations all these wild traditions and extravagant expectations have taken effect from the earliest youth. In the midst of a country where these customs and impressions have been universal for a thousand years, he draws the attention of the multitude to the only permanent and satisfying possession by saying, The kingdom of heaven is like unto treasure hid in a field, the which when a man hath found he hideth, and for joy thereof goeth and selleth all that he hath and buyeth that field.

He would show them that there is an infinite treasure hidden where all who seek can find it. He has come to lead and direct the search. The poorest, who keep his word, shall be made richer in everything that can satisfy the deepest want, than kings and conquerors whose names are written only in the earth. This infinite treasure can be found by every one in the field where he works, in the path where he walks, in the house where he lives. No hidden art or mystic spell or favor of fortune is needed to succeed in the search. When found, it can be kept so as never to be lost. He who possesses it shall only be made richer by sharing it with others. To possess such a treasure one can well afford to search long and earnestly, to work hard and suffer much, to sell or to sacrifice all else that he has. Whoever has that heavenly treasure is rich, whatever else he wants; whoever has it not is poor, whatever else he has.

In sight of the boat where Jesus sits, in speaking to the people on the shore, there are many cone-like ovens made of mud and mortar for the use of families in the town. Women are coming out in the early morning bringing on their heads bundles of thorns, dried weeds and brushwood, and in their hands earthen jars of bread for baking. The measures of meal have been wet the night before and the leaven has been hidden in the mass, and now the whole is leavened. The women thrust the fuel into the ovens and kindle the fire, and while it is burning they sit upon the ground in sight of the listening

multitudes, and begin to knead the loaves for baking. And so Jesus takes up his parable again and says: The kingdom of heaven is like unto leaven which a woman took and hid in three measures of meal till the whole was leavened. In such home-like way would the divine Teacher show untutored minds that their true life must come from an outside source: it must start with a small beginning, and work out of sight until their whole body, soul and spirit be conformed to its divine power.

So too would he teach them that his truth should lie hidden as a new principle of life in the heart of the great world, working unseen and silently, changing customs, feelings and faith, until the whole structure of human society should be recast in a new and divine mould, made after the pattern of the perfect and blessed society in heaven. By such gentle means, not by revolution and convulsion and war, should God's kingdom come and his will be done in earth as in heaven. The listening multitudes are looking for the march of armies and the casting down of thrones. Their Messiah must come with the confused noise of the warrior and with garments rolled in blood. He must rule the kings of the earth with a rod of iron, and dash them in pieces like a potter's vessel. Jesus would teach them that the kingdom of heaven comes like the sunlight, in silence and in power. The throne, which is to be exalted above all the thrones of earth, is to have its seat in the heart.

And now Jesus steps from the boat to the shore.

The multitudes have been so far quieted and contented by his presence and by the sound of his voice in teaching, that they no longer crowd upon him or upon each other. They make way for him to pass. They look with wonder and deep awe upon his face as he comes among them. With one consent they obey his word when he tells them to go about their ordinary work for the day and to think on what they have heard.

He himself returns to the house from whence he came out before the dawn broke in the east. The door is made of rough hewn, unpainted boards. It swings upon a wooden hinge, and it is fastened inside by a wooden bolt slid into the stone or mud of the wall. He enters, crosses the floor which is no longer covered with mats or sleepers, and he takes his seat at the upper end, upon a low ledge which runs around three sides of the room. It is made of mud or stone, the same materials with the walls. It is covered with coarse mats or rugs, and it is the seat of honor for guests and for the master of the house. His disciples gather about him and seat themselves at his feet on the floor. He yields to their request and adds other parables, that he may set the kingdom of heaven before them in every possible light. So he binds up the ever-living and ever-abiding word of God with the changing customs and perishable forms of earth. So he gives a material body to spiritual truth, that men of gross minds and dull sensibilities may catch its meaning and feel its power.

In these first lessons of his Galilean ministry, our

Lord takes great pains to adapt his teaching to the homely, every-day life of the world. Speaking in the house and by the seaside, he makes anything that may fall under the eye of his hearers for the time a form for the embodiment of his truth, a symbol to show forth the higher spiritual life. Jesus, the Christ of God, comes down to earth, not at once to take his followers up to heaven, but to help them so to live here that heaven shall be begun in them on earth. Our Father's house has all worlds for its many mansions, and our world, even in its present state, is one of them. We have been careless and unruly children, and have made much confusion and many quarrels in the home which our Father has given us. Christ comes to restore peace. He would teach us so to live that our heaven shall be here while we stay, and it shall be wherever we find a home when our Father calls us to go hence. And so Christ teaches us that everything about us in this world is the furniture of our Father's house, made for our use and advantage. So we shall learn to feel that our world is not cursed and cast off by its Maker, but bound with golden chains about the throne of God. Jesus tells us this not only in the parables which take us out into the fields of nature, but also in the instructions which he draws from the usages of society and the occupations of men.

TEACHING IN THE SYNAGOGUE.

The Synagogue.

They went into Capernaum, and straightway on the Sabbath day he entered into the synagogue and taught.—MARK i. 21.

VI.

THE SYNAGOGUE.

THE Jews of Capernaum were proud of their synagogue. And they had much reason to be, both from the size and beauty of the building, and from the taste and generosity of a single foreign resident, to whom they were indebted for its construction. It was built by a Roman centurion as a tribute of respect for their simple form of worship, and for the sublime truths of their religion. It was made of a creamy, white limestone, common everywhere in the country, and having the appearance of marble when polished. It is hard enough to stand the weather for centuries, and yet it is easily broken into square blocks for the construction of walls and foundations.

In some far distant age a stream of black volcanic rock came flowing down from the north, past the site of Chorazin, and entering the basin of the lake where Capernaum was built. The modern name of the spot on which the ancient city stood signifies Black Hill. Fragments of the black rock lie everywhere about the shore, and from them, as well as from the cheaper material of earth and mortar, the houses of the town were built. And so the white synagogue, with its pilastered front and lofty walls, stood out in brilliant contrast

with the black and brown blocks of houses which made up the city.

In our Lord's time synagogues were common all over Galilee. Jerusalem is said to have had four hundred and eighty. Any town having ten men of piety and integrity who had leisure to attend to public affairs, must have a place for worship, for the administration of justice, and for the instruction of the people. And that place of meeting was the synagogue. It must stand on the highest ground, so that no man's private house might rise above the house of the Lord. A city was believed to be in danger of destruction if the sanctuary were not higher and more conspicuous than any other building in it. The synagogue must stand in a place easy to find, and most likely to attract the attention of strangers. Everything within and without the house must be kept clean and quiet, and no noise of business or diversion must be permitted to break in upon the hours of worship, whether upon the Sabbath or upon the two times of meeting during the week.

As the temple was the most costly and the most beautiful building in Jerusalem, so the Jews thought the synagogue should be the most conspicuous and the best-built house in any town. Whatever faults they had in other respects, they were sincere and fervent in reverence and affection for the house of the Lord. And that feeling makes the children of Israel a separate and peculiar people still, wherever they wander throughout all the earth. And that reverence for the sanctuary will

do much to lift up and restore the scattered race when once they come to recognize God's living temple in themselves, and the Rebuilder of that temple and the Restorer of their lost kingdom in Christ.

The synagogue built by the Roman centurion in Capernaum was larger, more substantial, and more highly ornamented than any other of which we have any trace in all Galilee. It covered more square feet on the ground than the temple of Solomon. Square columns or pilasters, with Corinthian capitals, were set in the wall all round outside, and four rows of columns extended from end to end of the one main hall within. Many of the pedestals of the columns and portions of the side walls of the building are still standing, just where they were when Jesus moved up and down the five aisles and passed in and out through one of the three doors, the place of which can be seen at the southern end of the ruined building to-day. A great mass of carved and curiously wrought stones lies upon the ground where the beautiful synagogue once stood, and where now thorns and thistles grow in rank luxuriance. My last visit to the spot was on the 13th of April. Then in the hot basin of the lake the vegetation for the year was nearly full grown. My Arab boatmen insisted that it was impossible for one to make his way through the rank harvest of thistles that covered the site of the ruined city, and hid the carved stones of the fallen synagogue.

It can be seen however very plainly that the sacred

house in which Jesus spoke his gracious words and performed many of his most mighty works stood upon the highest ground of the city. The whole upper portion of the building, ornamented with capitals and carved pomegranates and vines, rose above the surrounding houses, and it could be clearly seen from every town and village on the shore of the lake. The plain, dark city of Capernaum, with its one holy and beautiful house rising above all its other houses at the north of the lake, made a striking contrast with the Romanized city of Tiberias at the south, adorned with its showy palace and luxurious baths, its theatre and race-course, its marble porticos and statues, and market-place, made after the manner of Ephesus and Athens and Rome. So far as we know Jesus never visited Tiberias, although it was in sight of his home, and it was the capital city of the lake country where he did most of his teaching and his miracles.

The synagogue was the customary resort of Jesus all through his thirty years of private life at Nazareth, and still more especially during the three years of his public ministry. When he excused himself before the high priest at Jerusalem, from giving an account of his disciples and his doctrine, he said he had always taught in the synagogues where the Jews were wont to resort, and nothing could be more open than his ministry. It becomes, therefore, exceedingly interesting to us to know the forms of worship in which he participated, and which, for the time at least, he sanctioned by his presence. Everything con-

nected with the service, the house, the times of meeting and manner of coming and going, will help us to form a more definite idea of him whose presence in the synagogue was always the signal for the gathering of a crowd.

The worshippers came running to the sanctuary as an expression of their longing to appear before God, but they left the house with slow and measured step, as if meditating deeply on what they had heard. They wore their best garments, walked quietly up the aisles. They manifested the utmost regard for reverence and decorum in speech and manners while engaged in the acts of worship or listening to the word. They considered everything about the house sacred, even the walls, the timbers, the stones, and the ground on which it stood. If it ever came to ruin, by fire, or age, or war, the ground must never be made a public street or a burial-place, or a pool, and it must never be given up to any kind of business that was unpleasant to look upon or unfavorable to public health.

The synagogue in which Jesus taught at Capernaum had three entrances, all looking towards the lake, the middle one much longer than those at the sides, and all closed by heavy folding-doors. The heavy stone cross-piece resting upon the two side posts of the central door, and the deep cornice running all around at the top of the room inside, were carved to represent vines, pomegranates, the pot of manna, and various other objects illustrative of Hebrew history. I have seen, lying among

thistles and rough blocks of stone, the figure of the pot of manna, which must have been in sight when Jesus said in the synagogue—I am that bread of life. Your fathers did eat manna in the wilderness and are dead.

At the upper end of the assembly room, opposite the entrance, on a platform raised several steps above the stone floor, was the ark or wooden chest, in which the book of the law was kept. The presence of the sacred scroll made that part of the building the most holy place. Worshippers bowed toward it with deep reverence as they came in, repeating from the Psalms—"I will worship toward thy holy temple." Before the ark a lamp, lighted with the purest beaten oil, was kept burning day and night, as a symbol both of the divine presence and of the soul of man made in God's image, and sharing the divine life. The lid of the ark was called the mercy-seat. It was overshadowed with a canopy and a veil hung before it, lest its sanctity should be profaned by too frequent exposure to vulgar eyes.

At the upper end of the synagogue, directly in front of the holy place, were seats of honor for the elders and doctors of the law. These were the uppermost seats, which the scribes and Pharisees loved, and for which the rich and titled personages of the town contended with jealous rivalry. The common people were content to take their places upon wooden benches or upon the marble floor. The five rows of pillars crowded and darkened the main room, making it seem like a forest of stone, and the blind walls and flat roof gave little oppor-

tunity for light or air. When Jesus showed himself in the sacred house, and every foot of the stone floor was covered with people pushing and struggling to get near him, and the close, damp air was heated by the burning lamps and by the excited crowd, it must have been a fearful task to stand and speak for hours, in such a stifling enclosure, to such a mass of rude and passionate men.

The ordinary service of the synagogue was a modification of the more stately and imposing service of the temple at Jerusalem. And the general form of service in Christian churches is a modification of the service of the synagogue. When a sufficient number were assembled, one of the congregation who was called out by the ruler or the elders, and who was expected to make many apologies before accepting the appointment, went up before the ark to conduct divine worship. He began with the benedictions, one called the Creation of Light, and the other called Great Love. In the one he blessed the Lord God, the Maker of light and the Giver of the day. In the other he acknowledged the great love and pity of our Father and King, and prayed to be united in the love and fear of his name forever. Then the whole congregation joined in singing the Psalms of David and in reciting selections from the books of Moses. Then a person called the chazan or sexton, who had the general care of the building, went up to the ark, reverently drew aside the veil, lifted the lid, took out the sacred scroll and carried it down to the leader of the service, who was

standing on a platform in the middle of the house to read. An exposition or partial address followed the reading, and the scroll was carried back and replaced in the ark. All eyes were turned with reverence upon the holy book as it was borne through the assembly, and both the reader in turning the pages, and the sexton in closing it up, took care that every movement should be made with the utmost quietness, solemnity, and decorum. Prayer followed the reading of the scriptures and the address, and the congregation responded Amen, to the petitions and the benedictions of the elders.

When this formal service was completed, opportunity was given to any in the synagogue to speak. And now, when the ritual for the day was finished, speakers were allowed the utmost liberty in choosing the subject and manner of their address. At the time when Jesus was going to and fro among the towns and cities of Galilee, it was a question constantly discussed in all religious assemblies as well as in private conversation, When would the Messiah appear, and what would be the signs of his coming? Jesus availed himself of this expectation, and of the free speech accorded to all in the Sabbath service, to preach the gospel of the kingdom of God in all their synagogues. With this object in view he often made his way to the beautiful and sacred house which the Roman centurion had built for the Jews of Capernaum.

The addresses made by the scribes and rulers of the synagogue were discussions of hard theological or

ritualistic questions, or repetitions of the sayings of the rabbis and the traditions of the elders, all expressed in such technical and mystical language that the common people saw very little meaning in the endless succession of words. They never suspected that it had anything to do with practical, every-day life. The speakers sought to fortify everything they said by quoting some sacred authority. They made it a rule in public address never to speak their own thoughts, or to choose their own language. Their whole effort was to string together in loose connection the sayings and traditions of the elders. There was a professional tone, a solemn manner, a succession of exalted and consecrated words and phrases, but no speaking from the heart, no touch of nature such as "makes all the world kin."

When Jesus spoke, the eyes of all in the synagogue were fastened on him. Every ear listened to catch the gracious words that fell from his lips. The tone was so natural, the words so simple, the thought so clear, the common people lifted up their bronzed faces with startled look, as if each had heard his own name called. The shepherd, the fisherman, the ploughman, the vine-dresser began to say within himself, "That means me. That is something that I can understand. It seems as if I had known it and felt it a thousand times myself, only I could never put it so well into words. This man speaks as never man spoke before, and yet as every good man would like to speak if he only could."

Jesus made no appeal to the words of others for

authority. The highest authority seemed to be in himself, in the fitness and truthfulness of the words which he spoke. His calm, thoughtful, serious face, his clear, penetrating yet pitiful look, his majestic and commanding, yet gentle and kindly address, touched all hearts, silenced all opposition, compelled the envious and the hostile to say, He has spoken all things well. They had never seen meekness and lowliness combined with such awful majesty. They had never heard the highest wisdom and the most sacred truth expressed with such childlike simplicity. They had never before heard a preacher bring religion so near to the common every-day life of the world, and yet it did not sound at all like what they had been accustomed to call preaching. They seemed to be listening to one who looked right into their own hearts, and expressed their wants and feelings so truthfully that they seemed to be doing the preaching themselves. They had been accustomed to hear everything confirmed by reference to the sayings and traditions of the elders. But when Jesus spoke it seemed as if it were a voice speaking in the depths of their own souls, and it carried conscience and reason and heart captive with its awful and resistless power.

The word of Jesus fell upon weary and troubled hearts as the blessed rain falls upon the parched field. It came upon the ignorant and the wondering as the morning light steals upon the darkness and brings the new day. He did not strive nor cry nor lift up his voice in passionate declamation. He did not speak as if it cost

him pain or as if the word were a fire in his bones, an inward cry that must come forth, or consume his life. The hiding of his power as a speaker was in the calm of his spirit, his quiet and supreme command over himself, his complete and graceful mastery of the most sacred and awful truths, his serious, thoughtful, unutterable tenderness of expression manifest in every look and tone as he spoke.

Jesus spoke to men just as he found them, not only in the synagogue, but in fields and shops and fishing boats. He spoke as one knowing all their wants and toils, their talents and their weakness, their sorrows and their temptations, and he taught them to become great and good in the hardest lot and in the saddest hour. He spoke to them all as children of one Father, and he made man in his simple humanity so great and precious in God's sight that he had little to say about the distinction between one man and another. He taught men to take up the common, every-day work of life as a commission from the Most High to be borne with reverence and with honor, and so to live in their earthly house as if it were one apartment in God's great house in the blessed and eternal heavens. And when Jesus so spoke in the synagogue of Capernaum and so brought the great, uplifting truths of the heavenly kingdom into contact with every-day life, it is no wonder that the common people heard him gladly. No wonder that they saw and felt in him the power of an authority and the inspiration of a life such as the scribes never found in the traditions of the elders.

On one occasion, when Jesus was in the synagogue at Capernaum, the silence and the decorum of the sacred place were rudely broken by the startling cry of a wretched creature whom the demons of darkness had subjected to their cruel power. The holy presence of the divine Healer awakened the most passionate and contradictory emotions in the mind of the one possessed. The mighty woe which had been brought into his soul by the power of Satan broke forth in a cry which seemed to come equally from the man himself and from the evil one that tormented him. There still remained in the enslaved and darkened soul light enough to reveal his own misery. The possessing demon felt and acknowledged the presence of the supreme Lord. And yet the unhappy man wanted the power to make an earnest and consistent appeal to Jesus for help. When his enfeebled will strove to offer the prayer, the indwelling demon possessed his voice and made him utter the petition that Jesus would let him alone.

How this afflicted and polluted man would have seemed to us had we been in the synagogue with all our present knowledge to help our judgment, what name we would have given to the disease which seemed to him and to the spectators to be a most real and terrible personality, it is in vain for us now to inquire. We can only speak of it in terms of the gospel narrative, and stand in awe of a mystery which called forth the highest exercise of the Saviour's power. So far as we can form any idea of the man's condition, he was like one in a

dream, feeling himself to be impelled towards the brink of some awful precipice, or about to be torn in pieces by wild beasts, all the while conscious that it is a dream, yet wanting the power to cry out or to shake off the spell which binds him. The will of the man was possessed by another and a cruel power, and yet he had freedom enough left to groan beneath the weight of the bondage which was upon him, and to desire deliverance by a mightier hand than his own. He had indeed first offered himself a prey to the powers of darkness by his own voluntary act. With his own hand he had opened the gate through which the enemy came in, and so his captivity had begun. So begins all subjection to the demons of darkness. Every man is safe in the house of his soul so long as he keeps the door shut. And nobody can open it to the enemy but himself. Whenever the foe gets inside, the power which he had to hold the fort may not be strong enough to drive the foe out.

So was it with the wretched man in the synagogue at Capernaum. He had opened the door of his house and exposed all its apartments, and laid bare all his treasures to the grasp of an unclean and unmerciful spoiler. And yet now the presence of the pure and the pitying Helper, the near possibility of rescue from his dark and dreadful bondage, made him unwilling to give up the palace of his soul to the evil possession. And his yearning for redemption, though expressed by rude outcries and profane contradictions, brought him within reach of healing power.

The calm and commanding presence of Jesus awakes the tempest of fear and hope and torment in the soul of the poor maddened creature, just because he has not yet fully consented to be at peace with the demoniac tyranny which has crushed his manhood, defiled his imagination, and bound debasing fetters upon every faculty of his being. The usurping demon of evil appetite and passion puts forth all its cruel might to retain possession of the man just because the divine Deliverer is at hand with offered help. Nothing better suits the malice of the powers of darkness than to hold the citadel of the soul in the presence of the Prince of Light. The wretched victim is torn and convulsed by the terrible struggle, and he gives utterance to his agony in groans and frantic outcries before the whole assembly. In him is fully incarnated the malice and the misery, the desperation and the demonism of the hostile power which Christ came to crush. The Prince of light and the prince of darkness are brought face to face in deadly conflict in the house of God. The battle must be fought out here, and men must be made to see which is the stronger power.

But the conflict is not long nor the victory uncertain. By the confession of the accuser and the destroyer, confused and contradictory though it be, the holy one of God is here, and the mightiest of the legions of darkness must obey his word. The evil spirit can only rend his victim with one last and terrible torture in the act of leaving him, just as usurpers and robbers will do the

utmost to destroy their prey when they can no longer hold it in their possession, just as the one great deceiver and plunderer is most active to tempt and torment souls that are renouncing his power and escaping his dominion forever.

The time of our Lord's ministry would seem to have been the crisis of the great conflict between light and darkness in this world. The evil powers which had ruled with strong hand and wide dominion over men thus far were summoned to meet their divine Antagonist with all their forces, and they were more than willing to come with all their hate. And hence the demons were brought face to face with Jesus in the sanctuary, in private homes, and in desert places. Their numbers were counted by single possessions, by sevens and by legions. Numbers are named in general only to indicate the reality and the strength of the foe. In this particular case the defiant power followed Jesus into the synagogue on the Sabbath, and cried out with noisy and profane vehemence in the midst of the solemnities of divine worship and instruction.

Jesus silenced and cast out the foul spirit with a word. The soul of the one possessed, torn and tortured by one final paroxysm of the outgoing demon, was at last calm and free in the presence of Jesus. The assembly in the synagogue rightly counted this the most astonishing evidence that Jesus was in very deed the Holy One of God. They had never before seen or heard of one who could command the unclean spirits

with such authority that they must of necessity silently and immediately obey him. By this single act, Jesus asserted and proclaimed his own complete mastery over the worst and over all the evils that have ever plagued and tortured the human race in all ages.

It may seem a great mystery to many that evil spirits should be permitted to possess and torture men in the time of Christ or at any time. And it is a great mystery always and to all. Our limited philosophy is not large enough to comprehend or to explain it. But it is only a part of the one awful and incomprehensible mystery of the existence of evil in any form. It is no more irrational that there should be wicked spirits, and that they should be permitted to do their chosen work in the world than that there should be wicked men and that they should be permitted to deceive and destroy their fellow-men. It is easy to say, as some do, that this record of the casting out of foul spirits is not historical, or that Jesus conformed his speech and work to the impressions of the time, or that the evangelists were honest but mistaken men. To say so, or to say anything like it, only increases the difficulty. We cannot reason, or interpret, or rationalize wicked men and their work out of existence. Why need we try by the same process to get rid of the existence of evil spirits? There is no place in our philosophy for either. And yet both exist. Both are very busy, and they have a very decisive influence upon the practical every-day life of the world. We had better conform our speech and our faith in this

respect to the words and the work of the divine Teacher himself. He spoke of evil as a mighty and terrible personality. He recognized one arch-deceiver and destroyer, and many subordinate spiritual agencies of evil, whose works he came to destroy. And we may well adopt his mode of representing the evil power in the world, until we reach a deeper philosophy and a more intelligent faith.

And here, in this synagogue of Capernaum, on a quiet Sabbath morning, in the fulness of the Syrian spring, the power of the prince of darkness is openly defeated and put to shame. It is done with infinite ease and in a moment by the infinite Victor. The great enemy, who has deceived the nations for ages and filled the earth with sin and misery, is smitten and dismayed by a single word from the lips of the Son of God. All other helps and healings which men need for body or soul will be easily secured when once the author of evil is overcome. He who gains the victory over the greatest foe may well be trusted to do for us exceeding abundantly above all we can ask or think. Man need be no longer a slave, nor subject to the power of the enemy, after having gained the alliance of One who can so easily crush the head of the tempter and all his serpent seed.

So the assembly in the synagogue of Capernaum understood the mighty work of Jesus in silencing and dismissing the foul spirit that disturbed the morning worship. For no sooner had the sun set, and the Sab-

bath ended, than all the city were gathered together at the door of the house where Jesus was. The lame, the sick, the paralytic, the possessed, were all there. Led by the hand, leaning upon the arm of friends, supported by crutches, carried in beds and on the shoulders of men, they all came with the full expectation that life and health would be theirs again, if only they could have access to him whose single word had silenced and cast out the foul spirit in the synagogue that Sabbath morning. And they were not disappointed. Jesus healed them all. When he looked out into the street at the setting of the sun, he saw one compact mass of people, sick and well, shouting, weeping, crowding, all eager to get within reach of his hand. The timid were frightened, the feeble were exhausted, the lame were trodden upon, the blind were groping by the wall, and the crazed were screaming with frenzy. He looked upon them all with such tender, pitiful eyes, and he put forth his hands to touch them as they came near, with such an expression of inward pain and exhaustion, that it seemed as if he took all the diseases and infirmities of the afflicted on himself. The tumult of joy soon rose above the cries of pain, and the screams of the maniac gave place to songs and shouts of gladness. When the wretched and suffering who were brought in beds and on human shoulders into the crowded street at sunset, went to their homes, they walked without help from friends. That night in Capernaum sleep came to many a couch where quiet rest had long been a stranger.

The next day there were no calls for the physician to make in that city.

And a deeper peace, a more profound and blessed rest, a more assured and abiding renewal of life comes to the heart when the weary and the sin-stricken seek help from Him whose touch was life and health to the afflicted in the streets of Capernaum. The divine Physician did all his mighty works of healing upon the body that he might prove his power and willingness to do a greater work upon the stricken and suffering soul. Into the streets of every city, into every house where the story of his life is read, he comes to do that greater work for all who need.

On another Sabbath morning the presence of Jesus excited extraordinary interest in the synagogue of Capernaum. The night previous had been one of tempest and darkness on the lake. The storm raged with great violence from sunset to three o'clock in the morning, and then subsided with strange suddenness into a perfect calm, as the flame of a candle is blown out with a single breath. The waves, which ordinarily required many hours to become composed after such agitation, ceased in the midst of their wildest commotion. One moment the lake was lifting itself up with convulsive billows, and groaning beneath the scourge of the winds; the next it was smooth as a sea of glass.

The Sabbath morning was calm and bright, as if no tempest had ever shaken the earth or roused up the sea. The assembly gathered in greater numbers than usual,

and as they hurried eagerly along the streets and flew up the steps to enter the open doors of the synagogue, there were signs of excitement and curiosity upon every face. It was evident that they had some stronger reason than the one usually assigned for haste in approaching the sanctuary. The sudden cessation of the storm on the night previous; the news that Jesus was already in the synagogue, when it was generally understood that the evening left him on the opposite shore; the still stranger story told by some who came around on foot from Bethsaida before the Sabbath evening began; the startling rumor that the mass of the people were about to rise and set up Jesus for their king—all this was quite enough to make the gravest quicken their step for once and obey the injunctions of the rabbis in running to the house of God. All this was enough to disturb the quiet deportment of those who were already engaged in the solemn acts of the morning worship.

And besides, the wonder and excitement only increased when they learned more fully what had taken place the day before on the other side, and how the night had been spent by some on the water. It was generally understood in Capernaum the day before that Jesus had gone over with his disciples to the desert country on the eastern side of the lake. As the boat was seen to put off in that direction after mid-day, and many knew that Jesus was on board, the people gathered in great numbers and ran along the western and northern shore, crossed the bridge or the ferry of the Jordan

at the upper end of the lake, and some were already waiting for him on the other side when he came to land.

Not to be wholly deprived of the object for which he had withdrawn from Capernaum, Jesus endeavored to steal away from the crowd and secure a little retirement with his disciples. But he was moved with compassion for the multitude as they continued to gather, on foot and in boats, from all the neighboring towns, and they seemed to him as sheep having no shepherd. The crowd of people was greatly increased by additions from the annual caravan of pilgrims on their way to Jerusalem to attend the great national feast of the Passover. Many were anxious to learn from his instructions, and others were only ambitious to go home and say they had seen him. For his fame had gone throughout all the land, and men, as bad and unbelieving as Herod at Tiberias, were exceedingly anxious to witness one of his mighty works.

Jesus came forth from his retreat resolved to teach and to heal the sick while the day lasted, and then to seek the retirement for which he longed, in the solitude and darkness of the night on the mountains. He knew that some great crisis in his ministry was at hand, and he was wont to prepare himself for such events by taking time to be alone with his Father, even though he could find that time only after the work of the weary day was done and others were asleep.

Taking his seat upon the grassy hill-side, where he

could be seen and heard by the vast assemblage, he continued to speak and to heal the sick that were brought to him, until the sun began to sink low behind the hills of Galilee. With all his great power, the work was wearisome and exhausting, for he was obliged to speak in the open air to a rude and disorderly multitude, and when he laid his hands on the sick, his whole heart went out towards the suffering in the act of healing, insomuch that it seemed to take from his own life as much as he gave to them. His worn and suffering face seemed to say that he had taken on himself the infirmities of those who were singing and shouting for joy over their recovery.

As the day wore on and the night was near, the multitude still hung upon his lips, and the afflicted were still pressing near him to be touched and healed. And there they were, weary, hungry, homeless, in a desert place, and it was far for them to go to find food or shelter for the night. There was a great number of women and children, as well as men, and many of them had only turned aside in their journey just to see and hear him. They had no preparation to encamp where they were, and if they should go elsewhere for refreshment, some would faint with hunger and fall by the way. Search was made for food, and only five barley loaves and two fishes could be found. And yet Jesus took that little luncheon which a thoughtful boy had brought in his basket, looked up to heaven while all heads were bowed low in listening to the blessing, and behold when the words of grace were

spoken, and the lifted eyes of the multitude turned again to Jesus, they saw before him a supply of bread sufficient for thousands, with a hundred-fold more than the five loaves left, after all had eaten and were satisfied. How that small provision had grown into a supply so great none could see, none could know, save only that the words of blessing had gone forth from the lips of Jesus, and then thousands that were ready to faint with hunger had enough and to spare.

The astonished multitude cried out that he who could do such wonderful works must indeed be the Messiah who should re-establish the throne of David and crush the heathen with his conquering arm. They were ready to seize on him by force, and carry him back in triumph to Capernaum for their king. They were eager to rouse up the passionate and excitable people of Galilee and march on Jerusalem with an army of a million of men. With such a leader they could not want for provision on the way nor for weapons to storm the Holy City, and to take immediate possession of the temple and the towers of Zion. But while such thoughts were rising in the minds of the multitude, and the murmur of a great movement was spreading from rank to rank, Jesus suddenly disappeared from among them and could nowhere be found.

Left to themselves they were obliged to hurry back the way they came. They were perplexed and confounded by the conduct of the mysterious and mighty one whose word had fed thousands in the desert, and

whose presence among them had kindled the hope that now at last the kingdom was to be restored to Israel. But he was gone, perhaps never to be seen again, and their new hope was only one more of the many with which they and their fathers had been lifted up only to be cast down and disappointed.

But they could only talk of these things by the way and hasten their departure from the scene of the miracle. For the Sabbath would begin at sunset, and the strictness with which they interpreted the law would forbid them to travel the distance of a mile even for food or for shelter on the holy day. If the night should come upon them in that desert place, they would have to remain there till the next sunset, or else, in their estimate, break the commandment by travelling on the Sabbath day. Gerasa, Bethsaida, Chorazin, Capernaum, Magdala, Tiberias could all be reached before sunset by those who started at the hour of the evening sacrifice, whether they went by land or water. So all left the scene of the mighty miracle on the hill-side before the going down of the sun. In an hour from the time that Jesus disappeared there was nothing but the trampled grass to tell where the hungry host had been seated, or the new-created bread had passed from hand to hand. The disciples knew no better than the multitude what had become of Jesus. By his command they had been constrained to take to their boat and leave him in the desert place alone. To them, as well as to all others who knew it, it was a very strange habit of Jesus that

he would so often, when weary and needing rest, go out into the night and spend its dark hours in solitude and prayer under the open heavens and on desolate mountains.

All these transactions of the previous day were known to the assembly gathered in the synagogue of Capernaum the next Sabbath morning. Some had seen Jesus depart for the other side the day before, and had not heard of his return. Some had come around to Capernaum by land, and the last they had seen of Jesus he was breaking the bread for the multitude on the hill-side. All were surprised when they found him at his usual place among the worshippers. And the disciples still more increased their surprise by telling the story of the night on the lake. They described the violence of the storm which had shaken the stone houses on the solid land and roused up the sea to a foaming fury. With Oriental exaggeration they said they were all exhausted and ready to die with the nine hours of hard rowing against the wind. With wild gestures and flashing eyes they pictured the appearance of Jesus walking like an angel form upon the surface of the sea. They repeated the cry of alarm which they raised when they saw what they supposed was the spirit of their beloved Master, and they thought he had come to some violent death on the dark mountain, and his spirit was appearing unto them to tell them that they too must soon die. Then with equal wonder, but with more quiet tones, they told of Peter's impulsive attempt to go out to meet Jesus on

the water, and of the ease with which the terrified disciple was saved from sinking in the deep. And, last of all, with bated breath, with voices sinking to a whisper, and eager clutching at the garments of those who listened, they told how the storm hushed and the waves went down, and their boat was at the land without another stroke of the oar the moment Jesus stepped on board. And then others came running in for the morning worship and saying that as soon as the sun was set messengers would be sent all over Galilee to bring in the sick and afflicted to be healed and comforted.

All this was quite enough to fill the minds of the assembly in the synagogue with wonder and curiosity to know the meaning of what they had heard. They could scarcely wait for the service of song and Scripture reading to end before they gathered about Jesus and began to question him with great eagerness and severity. They could not wait for one question to be answered before they asked another. And there were so many voices speaking at the same time, and so much noise from the trampling of the crowd and such stifling closeness in the air of the house that one who, like Jesus, had toiled all the previous day and had been awake all night, might well be excused for wishing to escape without making any reply at all. But his apparent reserve only made them the more vehement in questioning him.

"How came he there so early in the morning, when the evening left him on the other side of the lake?

Could he repeat the miracle of the previous day and support all his followers as the fathers were fed with bread from heaven in the desert? Had he in very deed walked upon the sea and hushed the storm with his word? Could he give health and strength and riches and long life to all who would set him up for a prince in the land? What new and great sign could he show them of his authority to restore the nation and redeem Israel? If such were his high commission from heaven, why not take this time to speak out and rouse the whole land, and shake off the yoke of foreign oppression from the people?"

And now the fearful crisis which Jesus had foreseen and feared had come. He must tell these excited and mistaken people that he had not come to be a commander of armies or to set up an earthly throne. He must cast down all their high-wrought expectations to the ground. Turning upon the crowd the worn and weary look which spoke silently of the toil of the previous day and the watching of the night, listening to their passionate demand with the tender, thoughtful, suffering expression which was now deepening upon his face every day, he waited his time, and then he spoke what he knew they would call hard sayings, and what would be a sufficient reason with many of his own disciples for going back and walking no more with him.

To all the questions of the eager crowd in the synagogue Jesus only replied by exposing their worldly and selfish motives in seeking him, and by declaring that he

himself was the bread of life. The manna of Moses and the bread of yesterday's miracle could only appease hunger and sustain life for a time. Believing in him, the sent of God, they should never die. His own flesh and blood must be given in sacrifice for the world, and they must live by faith in that sacrifice or there could be no life in them. It was such figurative language as their own teachers always used, and they well understood that eating the flesh of the Son of man was simply absorbing into their life the truths which he taught, and growing up into the life which they saw in him. It was not a hard saying for them to understand. But it was a hard thing for their sensual and worldly minds to do.

Jesus told them in language of their own choice that he had come to set up an everlasting kingdom in their own souls. His mission was to make every individual man master of himself, and able to bring all the faculties of his being into harmony with truth and love. That new and victorious life he had come to give to the world in the gift of himself. He had indeed healed the sick, and fed the hungry, and raised the dead. He had hushed the winds and walked upon the waves, and had taken by the hand a living man just like themselves, to walk with him on the water. But he had not come to change the order of nature which God made perfect in the beginning. It was no part of his mission as the Messiah to bestow health without sickness, or youth without age, or harvests without labor, or pleasure without pain. It was not his great work to bring in a material millennium of national

aggrandizement and earthly prosperity. The symbol of pain should be the ensign of his kingdom, and his song of triumph must be learned in the school of sorrow. It was his great office to give eternal life at the cost of death. If that gift be theirs, everything else worth having could be easily gained. If they decline his gift, they must be forever poor. If they have not his life, they must forever die.

The gross minds and dark hearts of the Galileans could make little of such sayings, not because they were hard to understand, but because the people themselves had no desire for the pure and blessed kingdom which Jesus came to establish on earth. That single discourse of his in the synagogue dissipated all the enthusiasm of the multitude to array themselves under such a leader. If their grand distinction as his followers must be a spiritual and a holy life, they would rather look for another Messiah. The desertion of his followers was so general and decisive that Jesus turned to the chosen twelve, with a troubled and sorrowful look, and said, Will ye also go away? And the disciple, whose garments were still wet from his faithless sinking in the waves, took up the word for all the rest, and said, To whom shall we go? Thou hast the words of eternal life. And yet even that warm and impulsive confession of fidelity only called forth a more troubled look from the face of Jesus, and a more sorrowful confession that one of that chosen number was a son of perdition and a subject of the power of darkness.

It will be a happy day for the tribes of Israel when they shall cease to long for the recovery of their lost dominion in Palestine, and they shall look only for a Deliverer who has the words of eternal life. It will be a happy day for the uncounted millions of every race and every clime, when they cease from their anxieties and conflicts for earthly possessions, and they look with one consent first of all to him who has the words of eternal life. The first want of the world is not a Messiah who will relieve bodily suffering, open new sources of wealth, bring forth abundant harvests without labor, multiply the means of present enjoyment without imposing the necessity of effort or the duty of personal reformation. Kingdoms and crowns are baubles to him whom Christ has made heir of all things. Titles and honors are trifles to him who has attained the high estate of the sons of God. The true Messiah comes to make the poorest sharers in that great estate, heirs of an inheritance incorruptible, undefiled, and that fadeth not away.

Let science labor on from age to age in the endeavor to find out the deepest mysteries of nature; let philosophy be equally intent to unfold the deeper mystery of man's immortal being; let genius embody the highest conceptions of beauty and give expression to the most delicate refinements of taste; let literature go on adding to its already exhaustless treasures of wit and wisdom, of history and of imagination; let the necessities of labor, the stimulus of invention, the pressure of business,

the demands of society and the responsibilities of public life be used well in training all human faculties and in developing the highest civilization; and still to crown all that culture, and to bring forth the truest, noblest character, man must hear the words of eternal life. Above all human masters, teachers, philosophers, we must exalt him who said in the synagogue of Capernaum, I am the bread of life.

The House of Mercy.

There is at Jerusalem a pool which is called in the Hebrew tongue Bethesda.—JOHN v. 2.

VII.

THE HOUSE OF MERCY.

WHEN men called the pool in Jerusalem Bethesda, they had little thought how much meaning that name would assume in after years. Bethesda, House of Mercy, name of promise, and a promise wondrously fulfilled on that day when Jesus entered the crowded porches and looked among the lame, the withered and the blind for the most hopeless case to heal and for the worst to forgive. Men called the house Mercy in hope that some suffering body might there cast off its pain and go home free. Jesus came that the stricken soul might there leave its sin and the burdened heart lay down its sorrow, and go forth from the house of mercy singing with such joy as the blessed sing in heaven.

Jesus enters the darkest home, where men live in sin and misery, and his presence makes it the house of mercy and the gate of heaven. Jesus comes into a world which sin has made one great lazar-house of diseased and suffering humanity, and his coming makes it a house of mercy to millions. When the fallen and the helpless hear his voice and rise at his command into the new life of faith and love, all forms seem to reflect the glory of his face, all sounds seem to echo that blessed word of his, Go in peace, thy sins are forgiven thee.

To the forgiven and the thankful, mercy shines in the morning light, and mercy gilds the setting day. Mercy sings in the laughing stream and shouts in the darkening storm. Mercy tempers the summer's heat and the winter's cold, revives the parched earth with the blessed rain, clothes the landscape with beauty and crowns the year with goodness. Mercy flies on the wings of angels to the support of the feeble, to the defence of the poor, to the pardon of the guilty. Mercy broods with bleeding heart over the bloody field where armies meet in mortal strife, and watches amid scenes of horror and agony when the glory and the magnificence of battle have rolled away. Mercy brings the message of hope to the despairing, of joy to the sorrowing, of rest to the weary, and of life to the dying. Mercy removes the sting of the last bitter hour, and pours the glory of Paradise upon the vision that is dim with the shadow of death. Mercy makes a house of God in every place where the penitent bow in prayer. Mercy gives immortal life to all who look to Jesus to be made whole.

We boast of justice in our dealings with our fellowmen, but there is nothing of which we have so much reason to be afraid as that God shall treat us as we deserve. Justice alone, untempered with mercy, would make the world a hiding-place for the guilty, and a prison-house for the condemned. It would thunder from the heavens with voices of vengeance, and it would whisper with more appalling accent in the secret place of the soul. It would shoot from the clouds with angry

lightnings, and flame from the earth with fires of wrath. It would poison the air with pestilence, and dry up the fields with drought, and waste the cities with famines, and make every human habitation a house of mourning. It would send the thrill of pain through every fibre of the human frame, it would haunt the mind with spectres and shadows of fear, and answer every desire of the heart with disappointment. It would reward labor with weariness, and make life a burden, and death a departure to the land where the light is as darkness. Such would be the lot of us all were every wrong thought and evil imagination of ours to meet at once a just and full recompense of reward. Such would be the consequence were God to answer the prayer of the proud heart—"Give me only that which is my own. Let the justice of my claim be the measure of thy bounty."

So then to this house of mercy named Bethesda, in Jerusalem, we may well turn our steps, drawn by the one attribute of God which gives us all our hope. What a pitiable scene, and yet how attractive to him who came to heal the sick, to save the sinning, and to comfort all that mourn! What a tale does this house of mercy tell of the want and the grief that come upon all wanderers from the true and healthful laws of life! The marble floors of the five colonnades are covered with a miserable multitude, whose silent aspect is a cry of woe, and whose bare presence in such a place is a confession of affliction and infirmity. The sick, the feeble, the blind, the lame, the palsied, the imbecile, lie all

about in hideous confusion, with no common bond but wretchedness. All are here for the same purpose, and all hoping to receive help from the same source. The stories that have been told of the healing power of the pool have awakened a faint gleam of hope in their dark and dejected minds. Though there should be but one out of all Jerusalem to be healed, and the power should come to the waters but once in a year, yet each would hope to be that favored one, and every day would be given by all to waiting and watching for the sign.

Here two faithful sons have brought their poor, paralyzed old father, and set him down with his feet in the edge of the pool, and they are watching eagerly at his side, ready to take him up and rush in at the first movement of the healing wave. They have learned from traditional faith and from the meagre philosophy of the time, to attribute all powers in nature to angel visitants, going to and fro and doing God's bidding in all the earth. To them the waters and the air, the gathering clouds and the revolving heavens, the healing virtues in medicine, and the healthful charm of music, the inspiration of great enterprises, and the new thoughts and purposes that come by dreams, are all controlled by ministering spirits, who preside over all the powers of nature, and all the nations of men. With such impressions, they wait for some sound of rushing wings, some flash of celestial light, some ripple upon the face of the pool, as a sign that the angel of help is near, and the power to heal is in the waters.

Some say that the verse which speaks of the angel's descent is no part of the gospel record, and that it was inserted by a later hand, to explain the gathering of the people waiting about the pool. If it be so, still the verse tells us truly what impression governed the people of the time, and how they explained the healing virtues of waters. And to understand this story of the Bethesda miracle, we must put ourselves in the place of the people about the pool, and look and wait as they did, for some angel visitant, till the Lord of angels comes, and heals the worst, without waiting for any movement of the water.

Close beside the two strong sons sits a mother, with anxiety and sorrow written in every line of her worn and weary face, as she looks tenderly and caressingly upon the paler face of her infant child. She is there hoping to secure the baptism of the agitated waters in behalf of her poor babe, that she may not be left to bear the burden and the woe of life's weary journey alone.

Here a young wife, with the hectic glow of consumption burning upon her wasted cheek, leans, panting for breath, upon her husband's strong arm, feeling that but for one earthly tie, it were better for her if the bitterness of death were already past. There an aged mother is trying to persuade her affectionate daughter to lead her home, and let her lie down upon her bed and die in peace, without seeking to prolong a life which has already had too many sorrows.

Here the blind have been led by friendly hands and seated on the margin of the pool with their sightless eye-balls seeking in vain for light in the noon-tide blaze of the sun. Here the wretched paralytic lies helpless with the half of himself already dead, and wishing that the other half would die too, or that both might live together. Here are some so withered and old, and poor, that one would wonder what life could be worth to them, unless indeed the healing waters can give them back the days of their youth.

Some are attended by many friends who cheer them with words of hope, and relieve their sufferings with every possible attention. Some have exhausted their utmost strength in dragging themselves to the house of mercy alone. Some are uttering cries of impotence and pain, some are sinking and fainting with exhaustion, some are waiting in calm and trustful silence for the rippling of the water, when it shall be swept by the viewless angel's wing. The long colonnade is crowded through its whole extent, and the wants and woes of the human race are represented by the multitude drawn together by the mysterious power of that healing fountain.

But see, a bright flush on the face of the pool, a ripple as if the surface were swept by a breath of air. Is that the movement made by the angel's wing, and will it boil up from the depths the next moment and show that the healing power has come? So it is whispered with breathless eagerness about the five porches, and the miserable multitude are all excited and trembling with

expectation. Some drag themselves closer to the edge of the pool to be first to step in if the movement comes. Some call imploringly to their friends to help them. Some rudely push aside the feeble and trample on the prostrate, and throw down the lame and paralyzed in making their way to the water's edge. Some are weeping with mingled joy and fear, some are groaning with the pain it gives them to move. Some are bursting with rage, and some are wild with idiotic laughter. The colonnade resounds with cries, and entreaties, and supplications. For a few moments it seems more like a mad-house than a house of mercy.

But there is no troubling of the water, and the excitement soon gives place to complaint and despondency. Many begin to say that it was always so, and the expected movement will never come, and that it is all superstition to talk of an angel's troubling the water. While the friends of the afflicted and the throng of spectators are thus engaged, a stranger enters the portico unobserved and alone. He passes along with a quiet step and a pitying look, till his eye falls upon the most helpless and wretched of all the company. He stands there for a moment silently looking upon the wretched creature, who lies upon his soiled mat upon the marble floor of the porch at the feet of the new and kindly visitant.

For thirty-eight years that miserable man has been bound to a crippled and suffering body, and the long and dreadful servitude has crushed his spirit and broken his heart. The lustre of life has faded from his eye,

and the expression of interest in anything about him has gone from his face. His whole personal appearance is most wretched and revolting, and the rest of the afflicted company shrink from approaching or addressing him. He is shunned the more carefully for the reason that his infirmity is believed to have been caused by his own evil life, when the passions of youth were hot within him, and now he is looked upon as smitten of God and accursed.

The people of Jerusalem generally hold the theory of sin and suffering with which the friends of Job tried in vain to comfort the afflicted patriarch. They take it for granted that any great affliction is sufficient evidence that the sufferer has committed some great sin. When any sudden and awful calamity falls upon a single individual or upon many, they say that the sin of the transgressor has found him out, or that divine vengeance has smitten because human justice fails to do its work.

And so all commend themselves for turning a pitiless eye upon this wretched man who is most in need of pity. He has no one to help him when the favored moment comes to enter the water, and the troubled wave betrays the presence of a new life and awakens the hope that peradventure that life may quicken some one of the waiting multitude. For years and years this helpless creature has dragged his poor old body to the pool, spread his miserable mat upon the stone floor at the edge of the water, and waited for the all-healing angel to descend. But never has he been able to step down

in time to be made whole. Somebody has been always before him. And so it has always been with him all along the hard journey of life. Somebody has gone before him and picked up the good opportunities, and left him to finish every day's march hungry and empty-handed. And he has grown so old and impotent, and his long misery has so nearly crushed the life out of him, that many wonder why he need exhaust his little remaining strength in creeping down to his old place, when his continued coming has done him no good. Many wish he would not come to shock the sensibilities of others with the sight of his wretchedness.

On him the quiet stranger looks with an eye so full of pity and an expression of such gentle and commanding power, that the attention of the wretched man is arrested. For years it has been his hard lot to live and see in every face the wish that he were out of the way. It was long ago that he saw for the last time in the looks of those about him any such expression of pity or any such sign of the will and the power to help. He has come to think men so hard and his own lot so cruel that he lies for hours silent and sullen, speaking to no one, giving no answer when spoken to.

But now that worn, suffering, yet all-pitying look has awakened attention in his dark mind and kindled hope in his dead heart. He is just excited enough to catch the meaning of the words when he hears the strange and startling question, "Wilt thou be made whole?" Made whole? For what other purpose has he dragged

his crippled frame to that healing fountain? For what else has he longed and groaned in spirit for thirty-eight years? What other blessing could he crave so earnestly, while the faintest gleam of hope continued to shine in his enfeebled and darkened mind? But now if it were not for something unutterably tender and touching in that stranger's look, he would think that the question were asked in mockery, for he has long felt that there is no eye to pity and no arm to help him. The healing movement of the waters is all for others, not for him.

But the wretched man has not half uttered his despondency before the eye that is fixed upon him seems to kindle with such a benignant and divine light as he never saw in the human eye before. The countenance of the stranger assumes a most fascinating and commanding majesty which no will of his can resist. The helpless creature already feels that he could travel to the ends of the earth at one word from that face. If the stranger should command him to do what a moment ago he believed to be utterly impossible, he would instantly obey. The inspiration of that look has made him feel that nothing which that stranger commands can be impossible.

And no sooner has the feeble mind of the man grasped the thought of such a command, than the quickening and creative word comes from the lips of one mightier than angels, "ARISE—WALK." There is no delay, no doubt, no question. The diseased and despondent listener feels new life rushing through every fibre of his frame.

Hope flashes like a new heaven upon his darkened mind. He forgets his thirty-eight years of helplessness and misery, and he is ready to attempt anything that he could do when the fire of youth was in his heart and his step was light as the roe's on the mountains. He can, he will, he must obey that voice, and in the act of obedience he becomes at once the strongest and soundest man in the multitude. He who, it was thought, would be the last to receive aid from the healing fountain, is the first to be made whole without its help. He who had waited so many years for an angel to descend into the pool and for some friendly hand to help him down into the troubled waters, looks in the face of the Lord of men and angels, receives one command from lips that could call the dead to life, and in the effort to obey that word he receives an answer to the prayer which millions offer in vain—Give me back the days of my youth.

The eyes of all are fixed upon him with astonishment as he springs to his feet, throws the matting on which he was lying across his arm, and walks forth with the firm and elastic step of former years. Excited spectators gather around him. The colonnade is filled with an eager crowd who hear the tumult and rush in from the street. The sick forget to watch for the movement of the water. The Sabbath stillness that reigned through all the porticos a moment before is broken by the clamor of voices. Every one is asking who has done this mighty work; how happens it that the most hopeless of all the afflicted is made well in a moment? In the

meantime the mysterious stranger, whose word alone has made the man whole, disappears, and can be nowhere found.

The world is one great lazar-house of diseased and suffering souls. Reason is blinded, conscience is paralyzed, passion rages with delirium, hope trembles with feebleness, and faith is ready to sink with faintness. The spiritual power to do life's work and reap its reward is gone. Christ comes to make the feeble strong, to give the fainting courage and victory. He makes the humblest home the house of mercy, he makes the grave the gate of heaven. The first awakening call of the gospel to every soul is still the same as that which fell from the lips of Jesus in the porches of Bethesda, "Wilt thou be made whole?" The bare asking of the question by such an one implies that the thing wanted can be had, and he has it to give, and all for nothing. The great cry of humanity which has been sounding on through all ages—who will show us any good?—is answered fully by him who comes to show us all good and to give us the power to make it our own. We rise superior to all sorrows and afflictions, and we go singing through every dark valley, we shout for victory in every conflict when we hear the word of Christ, Arise, go home, thy Father's door is open for thee, thy Brother waits thy coming.

It is not a partial or a temporary relief that Christ brings. He would make the wounded spirit whole, and so strength and beauty shall come to the house of flesh

WILT THOU BE MADE WHOLE?

in which the spirit dwells. He would save from a death that never dies, and so the death which comes and goes in a moment shall be no more feared. He looks upon us in love that we may follow the guidance of his eye and find a better home than human hands can build. When the kindness of continual giving fails to draw forth our gratitude, he tries the greater kindness of chastisement and sorrow. He withholds the enjoyment of earthly good that he may awaken the sense of need and call forth the imploring cry for a better life than earth can give. That cry must be awakened at whatever cost, or the lethargy of soul will deepen until all longing for the true life is lost, and the man no longer hears the song which the morning stars have been singing over him from the day of his creation,—"Made in the image of God."

The three great moral faculties of the soul are faith, hope, and love. Genius reaches its highest flight in the best exercise of these three, and they abide forever. It is the highest aim of human effort, the loftiest achievement of human power, the last evidence of divinity dwelling in man to believe the testimony of the infinite God, to hope for the inheritance of eternal life, to love wholly and forever him who is infinite love. And Christ comes to awaken this threefold faculty of the soul from sleep, and send it forth rejoicing in the strength and gladness of new life.

Faith is the living hand by which the soul takes hold on infinite help when sinking in the deep of despair.

Faith is the conducting medium by which the renewed heart is made to beat in unison with the heart of infinite love. Faith lifts the veil from the unseen world and cheers the tired pilgrim on his earthly way by displaying the glories of the Paradise above. Faith lightens the burden of labor, relieves the weariness of care, soothes the pain of disappointment by the promise of rest when the work of life is done. Faith rejoices in the depth of affliction, conquers in the great fight of temptation, waxes stronger under every trial of its strength, reposes for protection under the overshadowing throne of the Most High.

Christ comes to reveal the assured foundation for such faith. He goes before along the unseen path to show that the footing is firm for all that follow him. He fills the soul of the believer with the gladness of song and the strength of victory. He says to the blind, the endangered and dying,—Believe and thou shalt see the glory of God, believe and thou shalt be saved, believe and thou shalt never die. He says to the poor, the sorrowing, and the guilty,—Believe and thou shalt inherit all things, believe and God shall be thy comforter, believe and the sentence against thy sin shall be blotted out forever.

Hope is the recovered treasure, the pearl of infinite price, the loss of which had left the soul mourning in its cheerless house, impoverished and undone. Hope is the sure and tried anchor which can sustain the soul amid all the conflicts and agitations of the world. Hope

is the messenger of peace that comes with glad tidings upon the mountains when the heavens are dark and tempests shake the earth. Hope is the angel-guide that comes to show the way onward into the deathless land, when the journey of life leads downward into the valley of the shadow of death.

Christ comes to bring back the lost treasure of hope to a sorrowing world. He is the messenger of his own mercy. He has fought our battle, and he brings tidings of his own victory. He comes as a servant bringing pardon from the king, and the gift is his own. Our new hope rests on him and it cannot fail, for he is the Rock of Ages. The giant oak that stands on some high place in full exposure to all the winds of heaven sends down its roots deeper and spreads out its arms wider, the more it is swayed and twisted by the storm. So our hope that rests upon Christ is made stronger by everything that tries its strength. It is most triumphant and glorious when everything else fails and our feet are sinking in the deep waters of death.

Love is the golden chain that binds the believing soul in willing bonds to the service of the Supreme Sovereign, to the society of the beautiful and the blessed, to the infinite harmony of law and truth and life, forever and ever. Love lifts the ransomed soul from the deeps of despair, gives it wings to ascend the highest heaven, and a voice to sing in loftier strains than angels ever knew. Love, kindled in our hearts by the holy flame of infinite love, animates us to whatever

is highest and best in action, whatever is noblest in sacrifice and suffering, whatever is most like God in giving and doing for the good of others.

And Christ comes to revive in us the dying capacity for such love, and to kindle its faintest spark into immortal flame. Christ comes to lift us up out of darkness into the life and light of eternal love. He would make us companions of the sons of the morning who walk in light, and in whose heart the highest thought is love, and in whose immortal life the highest work is to do God's will. Christ comes to clothe us with robes of righteousness, such as shall fit us to walk with him in white and reveal no spot. He comes to give soundness and unconquerable vitality to our whole immortal nature by quickening within us the decayed capacities for faith, hope, and love.

Of all this there was little thought in the dark mind of the man whom Jesus found in the house of mercy, and to whom he said,—Rise, take up thy bed and walk. He went out into the street carrying his mat on his arm. And when men asked him why he did so on the Sabbath, he was so bewildered at finding himself back again in his strong youth where he was thirty-eight years ago, that he did not know what to say. It seemed all a dream. He kept striking out right and left with his arms, leaping from the ground, handling and shaking himself, insomuch that men thought him mad or walking in his sleep. And he thought so too. He could only remember a face that bent over him as he lay in

his rags by the pool. But he never saw such a face as that before, there was so much of heaven in its tender, pitying look. Yes, and he could remember a voice whose tones shot through every fibre of his frame like electric fire, and set him on his feet as a man springs up from sleep and does not know who called him, only he finds himself standing and wide awake.

The man kept walking, not caring where he went, it was such a joy to him just to move. He still carried his soiled old mat upon his arm, as he went about the streets, not thinking it was the Sabbath day or that anybody could be offended to see him doing as he had been told by one whose word had blotted out his thirty-eight years of helplessness and misery in a moment. His new life had come upon him so much like the lightning-stroke in suddenness and power, that he had lost the count of the days, and could hardly believe himself to be the same man. Men stared at him, and he stared back. The crowd opened for him to move on, and he advanced as if he were a king. When questioned, he could give no reason for what he did, or where he went, or what he was, save that one word, he was doing as he had been told by one who made him whole. And a good reason it was, be the day what it might, and let the people say what they would. He who can make whole with a word must be Lord of all days, and it must be for him to say what use shall be made of the new life which he gives. He, with his divine Father, works from everlasting, and with such fulness of power as to know no weariness,

and man's work is most nearly divine when done for him.

Afterwards Jesus finds the man where it was most fitting that he should be, in God's house, and there lays on him the awful word of warning: Sin no more, lest worse than thirty-eight years of misery come unto thee. What that worse could be he did not say; but the warning stands for all time to tell men that nothing can be worse than to sin against God.

The happy man, rejoicing in his new life, thought surely everybody would be glad to know who it was that had made him whole. And so he went everywhere proclaiming the name of Jesus as his benefactor. And when the Jews, whose spiritual life was already killed by the letter of the law, came about him with their clamors because he had done good, as God does on the Sabbath, commanding his sun to shine and his rain to fall and all grains and fruits to grow for man, Jesus confounded and maddened them with the awful declaration that God's work and his were all one, and that it was a small thing for him to make one sick man well, for the hour should come when the dead would hear his voice and live. And when the cruel and the cursing heard that word, nothing could satisfy their rage short of the death of him who claimed power to make the dead live.

Jesus comes to all burdened and troubled souls as he came pityingly to the man in Bethesda. His approach is so quiet and gentle that they often see no sign of his great-

ness and power. His voice blends so meetly with their own thought that they think they are listening to their own heart: "Wouldst thou be made whole? Wouldst thou know what it is to have thy whole being made anew and thy whole soul bounding with the pulses of blessed and immortal life? Wouldst thou be at such happy agreement with thyself that doing right shall cost no struggle, and good thoughts shall be at home in thy heart, and the way of duty shall be chosen as easily as flowers open to the sun and birds sing in the morning? Wouldst thou awake from the nightmare dream of pain and disappointment and find the world full of beauty, and the path of life strewn with blessing, and all voices tuned to music, and all losses bringing greater gain, and every disappointment giving the promise of greater good, and every affliction crowned with mercy, and death coming only to bring the crown of life?"

Jesus quickens such thoughts in sad hearts, and they know not from whom they come. They think it a dream of a life out of reach, or of a land far away. They call it a better mind, and more like the waking life of the real world, when they come back from such wandering to find themselves fettered and bound with unanswered desires and unfulfilled hopes. They think there is no escape from the burden that is crushing them, no hand to help when the task of life is hard, no rest for the weary but the grave.

Jesus comes to say there is rest for the weary now and here. He will show the way to all that seek, and give

to all that ask, and open the door of his house to all that come. And his word is best spoken by those whose reasonings and persuasions all take up and confirm the cry: Behold the Lamb of God who taketh away the sin of the world. Behold in the midst of the multitude, unnoticed and unknown, the world's one mighty Friend, who is able to bear all burdens and to bestow all blessing.

Sometimes he draws the heart with a secret and gentle power to God's book of life, and simple words flash out with a meaning never seen before. Sometimes he kindles a light in the secret chamber of the soul, and it shines out upon the page over which the reader bends in his blindness, and all at once the lines seem as if they had all been written for him. Sometimes he meets the burdened and the sin-stricken in the sanctuary, as he met the healed man of Bethesda in the temple, and he says, Sin no more. And that word sounds after them as they go for many a day upon the journey of life, a voice of warning, and yet coming from him it is a voice of peace and a promise of rest. Sometimes Jesus himself seems to stand in the place of those who speak in his name, and their words are armed with glorious power and clothed with divine authority. So comes our Christ to the great Bethesda pool of the world, whose porches resound with murmuring and whose floors are covered with the miserable, and he puts the question to the most helpless and wretched: Wilt thou be made whole?

All worldly plans are liable to fail, the most cherished hopes are subject to disappointment, beloved friends will die, sickness and danger bring us under the awful shadow of the eternal world, all earthly things come short of what we want, and they utterly fail us in the time of the greatest need. And all these experiences are Christ's ministers, sent in mercy to speak for him, and putting the question seriously, tenderly to the heart, "Wilt thou be made whole?"

Sometimes the love of Christ seems to put on a new and strange beauty, and we are drawn to his cross with a gentle yet commanding power. Everything that is noblest and best within us, urges us to give ourselves up in complete and willing captivity to the mighty constraint of that love. Our hearts are ready to break with longing for a better portion than earth can give. We feel as if we could almost see the face of Jesus looking upon us in tenderness and pity as he looked on the wretched man at Bethesda. We listen in the silence, and in the beating of our hearts we hear a gentle voice —"Wilt thou be made whole?"

So in a thousand ways Christ is ever urging upon our acceptance the greatest possible blessing—a renewed life, a right-thinking and self-mastered mind, a strong, rejoicing and purified soul. Everything which can make it a blessing to live, everything for which our deathless being was made, is ours in prospect or in possession, the moment we rise at his command and start upon the course which he sets before us. And the con-

ditions upon which he bestows so great a gift are such as to bring it within the reach of the poorest and the worst.

When Jesus entered the crowded porches of Bethesda, he sought out the most hopeless and wretched of all the impotent multitude, and made that helpless creature whole in a moment, that he might inspire all others with confidence in his power to save. We cannot trust such a Saviour too much or too soon. We cannot over-estimate his power or his willingness to save. We must ask, we must seek for nothing less than to be made whole, perfectly whole, body, soul, spirit brought into harmony with God, and all things outside of ourselves working together for our good, and the way opened before us for the highest and best use of all our powers, and the fullest enjoyment of everything that God gives his children forever. Christ is able to do all that for us all, and he desires of us nothing so much as that we shall willingly and thankfully take the crown of life from his own hands.

The Beatitudes.

Seeing the multitudes, he went up into a mountain, and when he was set his disciples came unto him.—MATT. v. 1.

VIII.

THE BEATITUDES.

IT is morning on the sea of Galilee. The water that lay sleeping still and dark in its deep bed all night, is now rippling in the slight flush of air that comes down from the cold hills, and the face of the lake brightens and smiles like the face of an infant waked by the first glow of dawn. The fishermen, who have toiled all through the hours of darkness at their uncertain and wearisome trade, are pulling for the shore, and the hills echo with the stroke of oars and the shouts of friends recognizing each other in the growing light. Great flocks of water-fowl with white breasts and black wings come sailing down from the north, and wheeling round and round in ever descending circles, alight at last upon the still lake and wait for the full day.

It is morning upon the mountains of Galilee. The flush in the eastern sky has kindled a roseate hue upon the high places of the hills, and made them seem like altars built by the worshippers of the sun-god and lifted up to meet their king in his coming. The warm blush of the dawn deepens and rises as if the day had been suddenly waked, and it passes swiftly over the oak groves of Tabor, and the cone-like peak of Little Hermon, and the bare ridges of Gilboa, and the long waving slope of wooded Carmel. There is no mist rising in the

valleys with billowy motion and marking out the graceful course of winding streams. There are no clouds wandering in white flocks along the mountain sides to give diversity to the landscape. But a thin, white haze fills all the air and tones down the rugged aspect of rocky cliffs and naked ridges and dark ravines, making the view far and near more beautiful, because the forms of things are only dimly seen, and giving it a dreamy look, as if the world were only half awake and unwilling to welcome the intrusive day.

It is morning in a hundred cities set on the hills of Galilee. A thin white smoke rises from a thousand fires made of thorns and the dried grass of the field by servants rising early to prepare the morning meal or bake the daily bread. Women are going out before the sun to the fountains for water. With heavy pitchers upon their heads, they are beginning the walk of weary miles between the town on the hill and the spring in the valley. Reapers are starting for the harvest field, for the summer has come and the hungry gleaners follow close in their steps. Shepherds are leading their flocks to the distant pasturage. Watchers, who have kept guard all night in vineyards and gardens and grain-fields, are calling for others to take their place during the day, that they may sleep while others wake, and be ready again to wake while others sleep. The barking of the dogs that mingled all night with the braying of the one most abused, most necessary beast of burden in the land, quiets down with the coming light. But shepherds and villagers shout

to each other from hill to hill as the day comes on, and their voices are answered by the lowing of cattle at pasture and the cries of children at play.

It is morning over all the bright world of nature in Galilee. The flowers lift up their heads from the baptism of the night's dew, and they breathe forth the perfume of thanksgiving to him who clothes them with beauty and gives them a single summer of life. The birds break forth into joyous song before they go out into the fields to find the food with which God feeds them for the day. The sleeping gazelle starts into timid and tremulous life, and bounds away as if every foot were set on wings under the impulse of the first shaft of light from the east. The golden harvests wave in the valleys, and the gray olive orchards rustle like a shower of silver on the hill-sides, and the fig and vine clothe the stony places with a richer green, and the whole world of nature looks as if it were putting on its beautiful garments and lifting up glad voices to welcome its king.

It is morning in the marble palaces of Tiberias, where Herod and his princes profaned the night with dissipation. It is morning in the stone cabins and mud hovels where happier millions slept in Galilee. The going forth of the morning is prepared, and God's sun will shine with blessing for rich and poor, for the righteous and the wicked. The light that steals in through silken drapery and reveals chambers adorned with all the glories of art, is not richer than the light which falls upon the peasant's floor and reveals a room with no

adornment at all. The sick man who turns wearily upon his couch all night, wondering that the morning can be so long in coming, the watcher who bends over him and tries to soothe his anguish as the slow hours move on, the mother chafing the hot lips of her dying babe and feeling tremulously for the last flutter of life in the feeble pulse, the sentinel walking his weary round and listening for the coming foe while his comrades sleep—all welcome the morning as if it were God's last and best gift of life.

The sick man is so glad to see the dismal and depressing night-lamp put out in his chamber, and the cheery morning come in its place. The weary watcher is so glad when the long, still hours of waiting are past and the patient's face brightens in the new day. The heart-broken mother takes the coming of the light as a promise that the waning life will come back to her child, and she shall not be left to mourn the quenching of that one star which God set to shine in her home. With such blessing comes the morning to the weary and the suffering, with such glory comes the morning on the mountains and on the sea in all the earth, in all time. It is with all these symbols of life and beauty around him in the broad fields of nature and in the busy homes of men that Jesus takes his seat on the mountain of blessing to begin a new day of light and truth for the world.

The narrow streets of Capernaum are less crowded than usual, and the stone synagogue is deserted. The

market place is quiet, and many fishing boats are moored along the bank and empty. Many dark lines of travellers are climbing the winding foot-paths that lead to the hills in sight of the city. They have learned in what direction Jesus went the night before, and they are going out early in the hope of finding him on the mountain in the morning. They have become so fascinated with his personal appearance and his manner of speaking that they are willing to sit for hours upon the bare rocks and the green grass and listen to his gracious words. They have deserted the city, the villages and the lakeside, left their fields and their fishing boats behind, just for the chance of finding Jesus in some solitary place and hearing again his kindly yet commanding voice.

The dawn has now grown into the full day. The sun is climbing the eastern heavens and the surface of the lake shines like a sea of fire between the dark walls of its encompassing shores. Far away to the north the snowy height of Hermon rises like a cloud of incense offered by the eternal hills in morning worship to the King of heaven. The surrounding heights and valleys, with all their varied outlines of barren cliffs and green terraces and wild ravines, stand forth to view with startling clearness in the blaze of light. The suddenness with which the dawn gives place to the day, and wakes the sleeping world, makes it seem as if the risen sun were the infinite source of life and blessing to all creatures that live. The flowers put on a new beauty, the foliage

wears a deeper green, the birds sing with a chorus of gladness, the flocks go forth with joy to their mountain pasturage at the coming of the full day.

Jesus has spent the night alone with his Father on the mountain. Strengthened by exalted and divine communion with the infinite source of strength, he is now prepared to speak words that shall go forth with power to the ends of the earth and endure through all time. The solitude of the night has inspired him with infinite pity for the multitudes who are pursuing the path of life without a guide, and finishing the journey without finding the way home. Wearied and exhausted as he is with the night's watching, he is willing to bear with the rude and impulsive crowd that press upon him all day and break in upon his retirement wherever they can find him.

Seeing the people approach in great numbers and from many directions, Jesus leaves his night sanctuary on the mountain and comes part way down the height to a level place to meet them. While the great multitude is gathering more closely about him, and is getting seated upon the grass to listen, he begins to speak first as if to the special company of his disciples, and then more and more to the mass of the people as they get quieted and are able to catch the sound of his voice.

Never before at any one time have so many gathered about him in a quiet place to listen, giving him an opportunity to set before them the great principles of the new life which he came to teach. The people are

mostly poor. They live in low dark houses of mud and stone, and a whole family has but one room. They work hard and long in the hot sun and on the hard soil, and they get little pay for all they do. Their food is the plainest and poorest that can keep life in the body, and their clothing is one coarse garment, worn summer and winter, night and day. They have no hope of rising to wealth and power, however hard they may work and however carefully they may keep what they get. Their yearly gains are so small that the failure of a crop brings them to want, and in times of drought many die of hunger. They live in a land where the poor have been ground down and trodden upon for ages. To them government is oppression and taxation is robbery. They are constantly fretted and maddened by the miseries which they suffer. But they are too weak to resist the ruling power, too much cramped and cowed down to rise above their hard lot, too closely watched to escape the tax-gatherer.

What will this new Teacher say to men whose lot is so hard and in whose hearts hope is so nearly dead? He is said to sympathize with the suffering, and to make his home with the poor. He lives on their hard fare, and he lodges in their dark abodes. He himself has worked for many a year at one of their lowly trades, and he has kept himself alive upon the meagre wages which the world gives for the hardest work. What will he say to let in the light upon the dark homes where he is received as a guest, to lessen the burdens which he

has carried upon his own shoulders, to open an outlook of hope for those who are driven to the verge of despair?

This seems like a formal opening of his ministry, and all are eager to catch his first word. He speaks, and there is a pause of surprise and inquiry in the crowd, as if they had not rightly heard. The whisper goes around, Did he say that—Blessed are the poor? He who knows what it is to be poor, he who has worked as hard as we, and for as little pay, does he say the lot is blessed? Is that the best word he has for the weary and the heavy-laden, for the overtaxed and the overworked,—Blessed are the poor! He promises the kingdom of heaven. But will that make the poor rich, and the wretched happy? Will it give land to the landless and homes to the homeless? Will it clothe beggars in purple and make the hungry fare sumptuously every day? It is the kingdom of earth that we want first. It is the thrones and powers and splendors of this world that we need now. The kingdom of heaven can wait, and we do not want it now.

But hark, he speaks again; and now surely some word of comfort will come from the lips of one whose face looks as if he had borne sorrow, and whose eye is tender and pitiful to all about him. He must know how the people weep and groan in hard bondage under a foreign yoke. He must know the heritage of woe and lamentation which has come down to us from our fathers' days. Surely if he be an Israelite indeed, he

will say something to fire our hearts with indignation against tyranny, and stir us up to shake it off. But no; there is the same word again spoken in a tone that breaks all hearts with tenderness and brings tears to eyes that seldom weep: Blessed are they that mourn. And is this all that our great, conquering Messiah has to say—blessing upon the lot that we have all found so hard? comfort from the sorrow that breaks the heart and brings the loftiness of human pride to the dust of penitence and humiliation? Is this the way of entrance to the kingdom which he comes to establish on earth?

But there now, he is telling us who shall have the best of all that earth has to give. It is the meek: Blessed are the meek, for they shall inherit the earth. We thought surely he would say that the strong and mighty, the kings and conquerors shall possess the earth. The meek must look to heaven for their inheritance. We thought money could buy, and success could win, and the iron hand could hold the fairest fields of earth. But he says the meek and the gentle, they that suffer wrong for the sake of doing good; they that answer reviling with pity, and reproaches with kindness, they shall inherit the best of all that earth gives, a peaceful heart, and theirs shall be the kingdom of heaven.

These people on the hill-side have come out early from their homes; they have brought no bread, and many are hungry. There are no springs about them gushing from the rocks. The labor of climbing the

steep places, and the excitement of continual talk by the way, have made many thirsty. If only here and there there were a lad among them having a few loaves of bread in his basket, and a few had been provident enough to bring a cruse of water, much suffering might be relieved. But there they are by thousands, with parched lips, sitting in the sun, and nothing to drink. Children are crying with hunger, and the parents have no bread. And still the calm, strong voice of Jesus goes out over the great host, Blessed are they that do hunger and thirst after righteousness, for they shall be filled. The pain of the parched tongue and the craving of bodily hunger are made to take up the word and to tell the gross and the sensual how intense should be their longing for the bread of life, and how deeply they shall be satisfied when their souls are fed.

So that same tender, deeply-moving voice tells the passionate and the pitiless that the merciful are blessed, while the cruel lash themselves with whips of scorpions, and the revengeful are their own tormentors. To see God is to see the source and the perfection of all beauty. To be the child of God is to be the heir of earth and heaven. And yet to the pure in heart alone is given the blessedness of seeing God in his awful and glorious beauty. To the peacemakers is given the great estate which the infinite Father has laid up for his own children.

So on the hill-side, in the open air, in the glow of the Syrian morning, Jesus tells the great secret of human

happiness; he freely gives the great good which the lost children of men have been seeking and crying after for ages and have never found. He makes God's way of happiness plain by showing every one that the path begins at his very feet. The conquests of David and the glory of Solomon, the command of all the Roman legions and the crown of all the earth, were less to be desired than the kingdom which is promised to the poor in spirit, the peace which is enjoyed by the pure in heart. In such simple terms the Son of God unfolds the first principles of the new life which he brings to men.

Great as is the change when the shades of night disappear and the morning pours its glories on the hills of Galilee, it shall be a greater transformation when the night of ignorance and superstition passes away and the nations wake to hear the voice of the Son of God. To the eye of the observer who looked out into the night an hour before sunrise, the earth was without form and void, the whole landscape was lost, swallowed up in the fathomless, infinite abyss of darkness. There was no color in the flower, no majesty in the oak, no glory in the forest, no brightness in the water, no greenness in the grass, no lines of grace on the sloping hills or in the winding valley. All was blank, formless, colorless darkness. But now with the going forth of the morning, all is changed. The returning light has revealed order and beauty and gladness where night made an empty and an infinite deep. To the eye of the observer every

morning is a new creation, and every day is the history of a new world.

In like manner the disciples of Jesus shall go into all the dark places of the earth and make the truth of his teaching and life shine along their path as they go, until the waste blooms with the beauty of paradise restored. And so with calm assurance, with the consciousness of power to make his word good, Jesus says to the little company of his disciples who are to preach his gospel to the nations—Ye are the light of the world. As the shades of night disappear before the rising sun, so shall the shadows of ignorance and superstition disappear before you as you go, and when your work is done there shall be a new heaven and a new earth. These calm words, spoken by one who seemed to be only a Galilean peasant sitting on the hill-side, have proved to be the mightiest words in the world, and their meaning grows greater and mightier as the ages of history move on.

The surrounding hills are crowned with villages whose white houses gleam with dazzling brightness in the morning sun. No true picture of a Galilean landscape would fail to make these shining mountain cities conspicuous and attractive to every eye. And Jesus takes up his parable from them and says: A city set on a hill cannot be hid. The fire of truth which he comes to kindle shall burn on the high places of the earth, and shall direct all wanderers to the stronghold of hope, the highway of peace. The life and homes and instructions

of those who follow him shall be the light and landmarks of all future history, until the Lord's house is exalted among the hills and all nations flow unto it.

Winding through the green fields, and climbing up the terraced hill-sides may be seen narrow paths, white and shining with the earthy residuum or sediment of salt which has lost its savor, and has been cast forth upon the barren walks to be trodden under foot of men. It is not fit for use in the house. It will only cumber the ground of the garden or the field. So it is thrown where nothing is expected to grow. It is given up to be blown about by every wind. In the utter rejection of the worthless substance, Jesus shows the doom of those who prove false to their high commission to keep the fire of his truth burning so that the wandering may see its light and find the safe path.

The people to whom Jesus speaks are rude, violent and vindictive. They are quick in quarrel, and very free in the use of cursing and denunciation, even when talking with friends. They commend themselves for their freedom from great crimes of violence, and yet when they are angry and excited, their tongues are as drawn swords and the poison of asps is upon their lips. And it is all a matter of course with them that they curse their enemies.

The distant hills of Bashan are in sight beyond the lake. They have been the haunt of robbers and outlaws for ages. The listening multitude have heard many tales of murder and crime committed by the

dwellers in that wild region. The Galileans suppose that to such men no pity can be due in this world, and nothing can be in reserve for them but the fires of gehenna in the world to come. And they look round upon each other with wonder and awe when they hear the words of Jesus spoken with tender and sorrowful earnestness: Whosoever shall say, Thou fool, shall be in danger of the gehenna fire.

Pleasure-boats are darting out from Tiberias and Magdala for a morning sail on the lake. Strains of voluptuous music and the sounds of wild and passionate voices come up from the still water. It is usual for the princes of Herod's court and the officers of the Roman army to be there, with their guilty paramours, leading lives of lust and dissipation. The crowds from the streets of Capernaum and from the country villages are waiting eagerly to hear the holy Prophet of Nazareth pour out his denunciations upon these foreigners and imitators of foreign manners and vices, who are accounted sinners above all them that dwell in Galilee because they do such things. But the listeners on the hill-side blush and hang their heads for shame when they hear him declare that the guilt of the outward life lies in the secret thought of the heart. They are constrained to confess that in themselves they may cherish secretly the fruitful source of all that appears so shameless and revolting in the greatest criminals. The voice of Jesus, though gentle and kindly, speaks with such awful and commanding authority that every one's con-

science says—He means me; and every one feels as if the secret place of his soul had been laid open to the light.

While he is speaking, trumpets sound the reveille for the Roman troops, garrisoned in the cities on the lake-shore. The long-drawn note rings out upon the clear, silent air, and dies away in prolonged echoes among the hills. At the signal, soldiers can be seen coming forth for their morning parade upon the narrow plain below. As they take their places in the ranks, they bow in military homage to the golden eagle, which the Jews look upon as the hated and idolatrous sign of subjection to a heathen power. The turbulent Galileans can never see that standard lifted with the customary salutation of trumpets and voices, without feelings of bitterest hatred and revenge. If they dared to do it, or if they had the power, they would tear the standard-bearer in pieces and trample the eagle in the dust and grind it to powder. And now the listening throng are impatient to hear what words of wrath the war-note of the heathen power will bring forth from the lips of this promised deliverer of Israel. But what does he say to inflame the passions of his hearers against the idolatrous and oppressive conquerors? "I say unto you, Bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them that despitefully use you and persecute you."

A Roman courier, with half a dozen soldiers, comes up the high bank from the lake, making his way across the hills westward, as a bearer of despatches to Sepphoris,

the capital of Galilee, and thence to Rome. As he passes in sight of the great assembly, he falls in with peasants, who are going out in the early morning to work in their fields and vineyards. The soldiers compel the poor laborers to go along with them and carry their arms and baggage up the steep ascent of the mountain road, and it would be no unusual thing if the men so impressed had to go all day without food and without pay, or until the soldiers can find some stronger men to put in their place. It is a common act of oppression, and it is often accompanied with brutal provocation and blows. The military take every opportunity to show their contempt for the native inhabitants of the country. The officers sent from Rome are men of great talent and high culture. But they will not learn the language of the country. Or even if they know it, they will not speak it in the presence of the people. And all just to express their contempt for the helpless subjects of their tyranny and extortion.

The act of seizing the poor laborers and compelling them to carry their burdens is done by the soldiers in plain sight of the multitude who are listening to the words of Jesus. They are all on fire with indignation at the infliction of the wrong. A single word of encouragement from him would lead them to throw themselves upon the soldiers in blind rage and tear them in pieces by main strength, or cut them down with their own swords. But the voice of the divine Teacher rises clear and commanding over all the murmuring of

the multitude: "I say unto you, that ye resist not evil, but whosoever shall smite thee on the right cheek, turn to him the other also, and whosoever shall compel thee to go a mile, go with him twain."

It is now mid-summer, and the work of sowing and reaping is going on at the same time in the fertile plain of Gennesaret, where the fields are green and flowers blossom every month of the year. The tillers of the soil are busily gathering what has already grown, and anxiously watching that which is still immature, hoping and fearing, as husbandmen always do. Fishermen who draw their living from the lake are watching the signs of wind and rain, and waiting for favorable nights to fill their nets. Traders have come into the lake towns from Damascus, bringing goods from the far east. They are on their way south to Jerusalem and Gaza and Egypt. They are anxious to buy and sell and get gain as they go from city to city. And so in one direction and another, on the land and the lake, in the towns and the fields, the shepherd and the vintager, the merchant and the artisan, the farmer and the fisherman, are all anxiously pursuing their daily tasks, and dreading the consequences should their labors prove unsuccessful.

At the same time flocks of birds sporting on the wing and in the water make the morning air musical with their happy voices. Great flocks are floating round and round in never ending circles overhead, high above the hills. As many more are floating on the water,

pausing occasionally one by one to rise on the feet with a cry of gladness, and beat the waves into foam with their fluttering wings. Still others, tall, graceful, and tame, are stalking about the fields, mingling with laborers at their work, and seeming to have nothing to do but to bask in the sunshine and take the food which God gives them.

The light-hearted and merry-voiced creatures attract the attention of the multitudes only to awaken the fear that the harvest will be devoured in the fields, and the fish on the shore will be driven beyond the reach of their nets. They wish that the troublesome plunderers would take flight and never come back, and that the harvests of the fields would never fail and the means of living never come short. And then the calm voice of Jesus takes up the fear of all hearts and leads it on to faith: Why take ye thought? why are ye anxious about food or raiment or life? Behold the fowls of the air: for they sow not, neither do they reap, nor gather into barns, yet your heavenly Father feedeth them. Are ye not much better than they?

The listening multitude are mostly poor. They have scarcely clothing enough for comfort or decency, and they wear the same coarse garment through all the year. A rough mantle of goat's hair thrown across the shoulders and bound around the body with a leathern girdle is all that peasants and fishermen can boast for ornament or for use. In summer and in winter, in the houses and in the fields, on the land and on the lake,

by night and by day, they wrap themselves in the same soiled and shaggy covering. They have a strong passion for brilliant colors and rare jewels and costly robes. They think nothing can exceed the happiness of the man who is clothed in purple and fine linen, and who fares sumptuously every day. They have sat down by hundreds and by thousands on the grassy hill-side to listen, desiring nothing so much as that the miraculous power of the new Prophet will be put forth in clothing them like the princes about the court of Herod in Tiberias, inviting them to feasts such as rich men set forth for the most honored guests, and enriching them with the spoils of their heathen oppressors.

The dark throng contrasts strongly with the bright hues of flowers that bloom everywhere in sight from the lakeside through the green valleys and oak woods, upward to the base of Tabor, and over the waving hills towards Nazareth. The fallow ground everywhere is a wilderness of bright flowers. The colors of the blossoms appear the more brilliant because the sunlight is so intense, and the earth out of which everything grows is so brown.

And again the voice of the all-observing speaker foreruns the wish of all who hear,—And why take ye thought, why are ye anxious and troubled about raiment? Consider the flowers of the field, how they grow. They toil not, neither do they spin. And yet I say unto you that even Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like one of these. If God pours forth so much

beauty upon flowers that have no thought and that die in a day, how much more shall he clothe in fitting garments children that are immortal as himself, and that are made capable of winning the crown of heaven?

Just outside of the crowd, seated upon a high place apart, are scribes and Pharisees from Jerusalem, who are there only to look on and criticise all that they see and hear. They will not mingle with the mass of the people lest their garments shall be polluted, and they shall thereby be defiled. And now the morning hour of prayer has come, they turn their faces toward Jerusalem, they bow and kneel and prostrate themselves upon the ground and repeat continually with unmeaning tone and mechanical gesture the same supplications over and over again. The multitude look upon them as devout and holy men because they pray so long and loud, and in so public a place. They think it not possible for themselves in their ignorance and poverty to come so near to God and bring down blessings upon their poor households by prayer. And now the voice of Jesus takes up the muttered sound which comes without meaning upon the ears of the multitude, and he says,—Use not vain repetitions, speak as children unto a Father, and be not afraid to believe that your Father will hear. Turn not a sad and doubting face to him, but believe that your father loves to see his children happy, and that his richest gifts are already prepared and waiting to be bestowed upon them that ask him.

The whole region in which Jesus is teaching has been

many times overrun by devastating armies. The Babylonian, the Persian, the Syrian, the Greek, and the Roman have all passed that way, foraging in the fields and laying heavy extortions upon the towns. The open country has always been infested by wild beasts and robbers. For mutual safety the people are obliged to live in villages, strongholds, and walled cities, the gates of which are guarded by day and shut by night. In many directions from the mount where Jesus speaks the people can see the way of approach to the hill towns, climbing up the steep, winding along the precipice, terminating at the guarded gate. Whoever would rest in peace and safety must be found within the walls when the shadows of evening close around and the gates are shut.

The people are weary of this continual watching against danger. They long for the time when all cities can keep open and unguarded gates day and night, and the tired wayfarer can find admission without asking and at any hour. They begin to doubt whether the promised day will ever come when the peasant can repose in safety at noon or night under his own vine and fig tree in the field, without seeking the protection of the town at all.

And from this universal desire to be released from the necessity of effort and watching, Jesus takes up his parable and declares that entrance to the city that hath everlasting foundations must be sought in time, and with agonising effort, or it will never be found. Strive

to enter in at the strait gate, for many I say unto you will seek to enter in, and shall not be able, when once the Master hath shut to the door. As there is a season for sowing the field, and if it pass unimproved, it comes not back to him who asks its return, so there is a time to train the mind, to purify the heart, to lift up the soul to a higher life, and if that time be suffered to run to waste, it will never come again, however earnestly it may be desired. The sun may shine to-morrow just as to-day, but it will not bring to life the flowers that died at eventide. Next year's summer may be as warm and full of life as this. But the shoots that are now young and tender will then be grown into hard wood and they will not bend. And so all nature through the rolling year, so all history and custom as the current of human life flows on, takes up the Master's word and says, Do the work of the day while the day last, enter the strong city while the gate is open, and the watchmen upon the walls say come.

The multitude gathered upon the mountain side above Capernaum to hear the words of Jesus have come from Galilee and from Decapolis, and from Jerusalem and from Judea and from beyond Jordan. Some of them have lived by the waters of Merom in reed hovels which a gust of wind would blow away. Some have dwelt in mud-built cabins which a long-continued rain could level with the earth. Some have lived in houses whose foundations rest upon solid rock, whose walls are made of heavy blocks of stone, and they have been

standing for a thousand years. Some live in narrow valleys the bed of which is sometimes dry and sometimes filled with a rushing and roaring torrent, that sweeps everything but the solid rock before it.

Across the lake can be seen wild ravines and gorges down which the cold winds of Hermon and Bashan sweep with a fury that prostrates everything in its way and ploughs up the quiet little sea into a phrensy of foam. Many have looked forth from their safe habitations on the high places of the rock while the swollen streams rushed below, and descending torrents of rain filled all the air. Many have seen the place where the indolent and thoughtless man had built his house and lived for a few seasons upon the pleasant and more accessible plain, and then at last when the winter storms broke with unusual violence upon the hills, was himself swept away by the swollen torrent with the ruin of his own dwelling.

Surely such an audience sitting in sight of the things named will feel the force of the warning and the promise with which Jesus concludes his sermon on the mount: Whoso heareth and doeth these sayings of mine, shall be like the wise who built on the rock. And whoso heareth these sayings of mine and doeth them not, shall be like the foolish who built on the sand.

For eighteen hundred years faith has kept the sayings of Jesus, and built upon himself as the living Rock. The storms of persecution and the floods of sorrow and

the stormy winds of calamity have blown and beaten upon the house of faith, but it still stands, for it is founded upon the eternal Rock. Unto millions the teaching of Jesus is still more wonderful and more full of meaning than it was to the multitude on the mountain, and he speaks now to the cultivated and the powerful with more authority than he then spoke to the ignorant and the poor.

For eighteen hundred years unbelief has been building upon the shifting sands of human opinion and worldly interest and idle speculation, and nothing built upon that foundation has been able to stand. Amid all the tempests that have swept the earth, the firm house, the impregnable fortress, the holy temple of Christian faith, has stood secure upon the high and eternal Rock. Though veiled at times in clouds, it has come forth brighter from the darkness of every storm. The floods which have carried away its outer defences of human forms have only shown more clearly the firmness of its true foundation. And this stronghold of faith, which rests upon Christ, as the living and eternal Rock, shall remain secure, offering rest to the weary and a hiding-place to the perishing till the last tempest breaks.

The mode in which Jesus taught the multitude on the mountain side is still the best mode of teaching the highest truth to those who already know it best. He bound up the lessons of the heavenly kingdom in earthly forms, so that men could easily grasp their meaning and

keep them ever before the eye. With all our advance in knowledge, in culture, in riches and in power, we have found nothing better than to follow the teachings of Jesus, and learn God's bounty from the rain and the sunlight, take warning of danger from the storm, receive the lesson of trust from the birds, make our lives in lowliness and purity like the lily.

With the few and simple examples in the teaching of Jesus for our guide, we can pass with reverent step and delighted mind through all the mysteries and glories of creation, and we can see in them all revelations of the infinite God. We can make every excursion through the fields of nature a return to the blessed time when man walked with God in Paradise. Led by the instructions and animated by the spirit of Jesus, we receive every year of life as a new gift of time fresh from the hand of God, and the more precious to us because so full of him. We hear his voice in the whisper of the evening wind and in the roar of the winter storm. We see his shining steps on the hills of the morning in the light of the breaking day, and we trace his pathway in the fields by the blooming flowers, the springing grass and the billows of golden grain.

Christ's mode of teaching confirms all that the Hebrew prophets and psalmists said about the manifestations of God in the works of his hands. Taught in the school of Christ, and inspired by ancient and sacred song, we see revelations of God all about us in the world. We welcome the fulfilment of his covenant with the earth in the

course of the seasons and in the round of the rolling year. We recognize his hand in the opening year, the gentle dew and the genial rain; the growing fruit and the ripening harvest. We walk with him in the broad noon, in the glow of the sunset and under the solemn stars by night. Our homes and journeys and resting-places are gladdened by the light of his smile, in the crowded city, in the green country and by the sounding sea.

We take up what Jesus said about birds, and clouds, and flowers, and trees, and rain in Syria, and we apply it to nature in these Western lands, where we have greater variety of season, and landscape, and production, and we make our own country more full of God to us than ever the Holy Land could be to its inhabitants. Giving free range to a devout imagination, we see his garments of glorious beauty trailing through the valleys in the sweep of the sunset clouds, and in the silvery shower of the summer rain; we hear the sound of his going in the tree-tops, when the wind plays with viewless fingers upon the million harpstrings of trembling foliage and waving branches; we are dazzled by the vision of his glory in the flaming hues of autumn and the royal robes of the crowned and completed year.

To him who has learned from Jesus to see a revelation of God in the rain and the flowers, the daily sweep of the sunlight over mountain and hill, and valley and plain, is the progress of a King who scatters gifts in golden showers as he goes and cheers all the homes

and paths of men by the gladness of his coming. And he is ever answering in nature as well as in his higher spiritual kingdom the prayer of his children—Come, come quickly. He comes in the brightness of the new day, and every heart is quickened by the returning light. He comes in the clouds, and every eye sees him in the blessed rain. He comes in the genial spring, and millions of voices sing for joy in the wild woods and flowering fields. He comes in all the vital forces of advancing summer, and flowers are changed to fruit, and new voices are added to the choirs of spring, and happy millions rejoice in the new gift of life. He comes in the gathered harvest, and in the coronation of the year, and the forests march with banners of flame through the valleys and climb the mountain sides in festive garments to meet their King.

If we take what Jesus says about the birds and the flowers, and the rain and the sunlight, and make a general application of the lessons which he draws from familiar objects and operations in nature, we shall see God in all the changes of the year; we shall recognize him to be the primal cause in all motion and form and life. His free, sovereign will is the one supreme law, the one eternal, unexhausted force, which rules in the infinite realm of matter and of mind. The light shines and the clouds form, and the rains fall at his command. He maketh grass to grow upon the mountains, and he bringeth forth food out of the earth for man and beast.

When we study nature after the method of the sermon

on the mount, we go behind and beyond impersonal law and material force to Him who holds them both in his hand, and who makes them the instruments of his will. We talk less about the hidden forces of nature than of Him who makes the day and the night, the summer and the winter, who commands the clouds and calls the rain, whose bidding is done by the stormy wind, the wasting pestilence, and the devouring fire.

The laws of nature about which our modern science has much to say and more to learn, are only the constant and orderly mode in which God puts forth his power in the world. The sun and stars arise and set at a precise moment of time, because God appoints them so to do. When we trace their path in the heavens, we are following the footsteps of the infinite Maker. The bounties of the seasons are the blessings which he bestows to fill our hearts with gladness. Our daily support comes as directly from him as if we could see an open hand put forth every morning to give us food. The intermediate steps along which the blessing travels to reach our homes are all prescribed by the infinite Giver, and nothing can be near or far to him who is present with us every moment, and in whom we live and move and have our being.

The science of the sermon on the mount finds a soul of infinite intelligence, power and love to be the source of all phenomena, and the explanation of all mystery in this ever-moving and mighty order of nature. That one infinite soul thinks and desires and knows and loves,

just as we do, only more wisely and better. He is so much like us that Jesus teaches us to call him our Father, and to behave ourselves always as his children. It is the great aim of the teachings of Jesus to make us better acquainted with this great and good Father, and to show us how we shall become more like him. In the sermon on the mount Jesus opens our eyes to see signs of power and wisdom and love in all of God's providences and in all his works. With him to explain all, to govern all, to bring good out of all, the world about us becomes one apartment in our Father's house of many mansions. Our life is appointed as a school to prepare us to appear as princes in the palace of the King eternal, immortal and invisible. All we have and learn and do here is only appointed to fit us for the great and true life beyond.

It seems fitting that thus much should be said here concerning Christ's parables of nature, because though few and brief they give us the key with which to unlock the mighty labyrinth and expose its mysteries to the light of day. His one sentence about God's feeding the birds and clothing the lilies clears away all pagan superstitions and horrors about awful and mysterious beings haunting the secret places of nature. Taking the word of Jesus, and seeing our Father's work in every form of life and existence, we are at home in apartments fitted and furnished for us by one who knows our slightest want.

This mighty mansion of the world, with all its infinite

decoration of forests and mountains and seas, with the curtaining heavens, and blazing suns, and countless stars, is home to us, because it is the house built and furnished for us by our Father. We recognize the trace of his hand in the delicate coloring of the flower and in the waving outline of the landscape. We see his smile in the light of the opening day, and in the beauty which gladdens the earth and heavens. We hear his voice in the song of the birds and in the thunder of the storm. We acknowledge his gifts in the order of the seasons, in the bounty of the harvest, and in the faculties of our being, which enable us to know our Benefactor, and to thank him for his kindness. We trace his guiding hand along all the lines of human history, through all the conflicts and revolutions in human society, in advance of all the progress which makes man's condition in the world better from age to age. We see this divine Teacher and Benefactor leading the march of improvement in the face of all opposing powers, making every succeeding day brighter and better than the one which went before. We listen to his voice, still and small, whispering the blessing of peace and love in the secret place of the soul. And we humbly, thankfully believe that this living frame of ours is a holy temple for the indwelling of the Holy One.

Such is the divine philosophy of nature taught in the sermon on the mount, when Jesus sends us to the birds and the flowers to learn the lesson of trust in God, and he sets the rain and the sunshine to tell us of our

Father. Accepting that philosophy we see God in everything, and we call upon everything to praise him. We are not afraid to risk the ridicule of the sceptic or the pitying smile of the scientist for the satisfaction of saying, Let everything that hath breath or being praise the Lord.

Walks in Galilee.

He preached throughout all Galilee.—MARK i. 37.
Jesus went thence, and departed into the coasts of Tyre and Sidon.—MATT. xv. 21.

IX.

WALKS IN GALILEE.

WEARIED with excessive toil, hindered and baffled continually in his work by the cunning and persistent opposition of scribes and spies from Jerusalem, Jesus resolved to leave Capernaum and the lakeside towns for a while, and make an excursion northward among the hills of Galilee. It would be loss of time for him to continue longer in that contentious city. Whenever he attempted to teach the people in the synagogue on the Sabbath, his words were sure to be caught up and wrested by his ever-watchful enemies, and the service would break up with wrangling and dispute between the two parties of his hearers. One said no man could speak with such gracious words and do such mighty works unless God were with him. The other said these words were against the traditions and sacred usages of the nation, and this power was from the prince of darkness.

When he went out into the open air and sought to make his way home, he was beset behind and before by a great and noisy multitude that filled the street and made it well-nigh impossible to move on. The lame, the blind, the sick, the paralyzed, the deformed, the insane, the unclean, were set in the way where he was likely to pass. Their cries filled the air when he came

where they were, and their friends caught his garments and prostrated themselves before his feet, and implored his pity. When he came to the house, the door, the rooms, the court and the roof would be crowded by the same sort of people, and the air inside would be worse than the unventilated wards of a lazaretto. He must take his noonday meal in the midst of such company, and he must sleep at night in the same apartments which still held the stifling air of the day.

When he went down to the lakeside to talk with the fishermen, the people from the town followed him, and they crowded upon him so closely that he was obliged to step into a boat and move off a little from the shore, and so speak to the men in the boats and the multitude on the land. When he went out to the hills to get a little quiet, he was obliged to steal away unobserved in the night or before day in the morning. As soon as it was light, the people would run hither and thither in every direction until they found him, and then he would have compassion on them, because they seemed to him so much like sheep without a shepherd, wandering in the waste places of the wilderness and in danger of being lost. He could not help pitying them, and yet it would be for their good to be left to themselves for a while to think on what he had taught them already.

And so Jesus set forth with his disciples upon his northward journey into the borders of Tyre and Sidon. The people followed him in great numbers far up the hills when they saw him leaving the low basin of the

CHRIST HEALING THE SICK

lake. But they fell off gradually and went back when they saw his face was set as if he would not return for the night. When he reached the heights half way to a city on a hill above all the cities in Galilee, he and his disciples were nearly alone. The time of starting could have been no other than the morning hour, and the mid-day halt would find them high enough to overlook the whole landscape about the lake and a large portion of the cultivated hills and valleys of Galilee.

The cities and villages that everywhere crowned the high places in the time of Christ are now gone. But the main features of the country are the same; and having seen it again and again as it now is, we can describe much that Jesus and his disciples saw when they rested at noon in their northward journey and looked back upon the scenes they had left behind.

It was early summer in Syria when Jesus began this excursion into the borders of Tyre. There was a thin blue haze in the air, veiling the landscape a little, and making it seem more beautiful than it would in the clear, bright sunshine. The bare rocks in the distance looked as if covered with gray moss or low green grass. The far-off heights took the shape of castles and temples lifted up on high to guard the homes and inspire the faith of the people. Tabor lifted up its rounded waving ridge, crowned with oaks on the south, and the cone-like peak of Little Hermon in the same direction seemed as if it were a turret or a buttress of the dome-like sanctuary of Tabor. The top of Hermon was

crowned with a ruined temple of massive stones and lofty walls, within which altar fires had once been kindled to the sun-god in the morning, and to the queen of heaven in the night. A little way up from the plain on the northern slope was the city of Nain, where the summer before Jesus met the funeral procession on its way to the grave, and raised up the dead man from the bier and sent him back alive to his home to gladden his widowed mother's heart. The idol temple on the bare top of the mountain was the image of death and despair. The word of Jesus on the edge of the green plain below was the reality of life and hope.

Farther away southward behind Hermon were the mountains of Gilboa, where Gideon ranged his night attack upon the camp of the Midianites, and Saul and Jonathan fell down slain upon their high places. Southwest, the long, wooded ridge of Carmel was lifted up from the Great Sea on the one side and the great plain of Jezreel on the other. Nearer by, Nazareth was hidden within the circle of its fifteen encompassing hills. All the high places in the southward view as far as Tabor were crowned with oaks, all the hill-sides were covered with fig and olive orchards, and all the plains were russet with ripened grain, or green with luxuriant grass. The paths in the fields and among the vineyards were bare and glistering, and up the steep places they were strewn with jagged rocks—rocks worn and perforated and bleached white by lying for ages exposed to sun and storm. The oaks had large, low trunks, supporting

a mass of fresh-grown branches. The trees stood apart from each other as if set by the hand of man. In the distance the oak forests could not be distinguished from the orchards of fig and olive. And so the whole hill country with the intervening valleys seemed a garden in the filmy veil of the blue air.

When Jesus and his disciples started out of Capernaum on their journey toward Tyre, they passed along the lakeside for a little distance, and then they turned northward and began the ascent of the hills. Around them all the way were the parables in nature which Jesus had taken up and consecrated in teaching the people. Lilies were growing in great abundance along the shore. And the weary ploughman, coming in from the field at evening, and the more weary fisherman pulling ashore from his night's toil in the morning, could see a sermon upon trust and peace in the gentle flowers that lined their pathway home.

The neglected corners of the fields, the wayside paths, and the ground lying fallow for the year were all yellow with the bright blossoms of mustard, some of the stalks as high as the head of the horseman when riding, and many of the branches bent with the weight of happy birds singing their morning song, to cheer the hearts of the laborers as they went forth to their toil. And those who had heard Jesus speaking on the mountain or by the sea could take from the birds his lesson on freedom from care, and from the mustard plant the promise that the smallest beginning of the true and good life shall

grow into a mighty kingdom of riches and power, and shall endure throughout all ages.

And yet, again, in the fields through which Jesus and his disciples walked in beginning their journey, tares were mingled with the wheat, looking so much like the grain in their first growth as to be taken for the wheat itself. In some fields women and children were moving about among the wheat looking for the tares and pulling them up, sometimes pulling up the wheat also, or treading it down while searching for the tares. And in other fields wheat and tares were left to grow together until the harvest. And the word of Jesus had given to both fields a warning for men to heed in the work of rooting out evil and planting good in the great field of the world.

All along the path as they walked by the seaside, and still farther on as they turned up into the hills and climbed the steep places, thorns were growing with spines thick and sharp, and the travellers needed to take heed not to have their garments torn and their sandals pierced by the hardy shrubs which had sprung up and choked all useful vegetation, and were themselves fit only to be burned. For miles they passed on over shelving rocks, which in some places were covered with a thin coating of earth and in others were bare. The sun shining hot upon the thin earth in the early spring, when occasional showers were falling, had caused the grass and grain seeds to grow rapidly and give the first promise of early harvests. But when the showers

ceased and the heat of summer came on, the early growth all withered away. When the company of the disciples passed that summer's morning, and they saw the dry stubble on the thin earth, they were reminded of the Master's word about the seed falling upon stony places, and the word received with joy at first and rejected with scorn at last.

As the little company rested in the olive shade on the hills, a thousand feet above the lake, they could look down upon a thousand boats moving to and fro upon the smooth surface of the water, and upon a thousand birds of bright plumage and broad wing, sailing with greater ease in the still air above the sea. They could count the busy little towns set in the coves and sheltered nooks along the shore, and they could see the people by thousands coming and going along the white paths across the plain of Gennesaret and up among the hills. They could look down upon the lofty roof of the synagogue in Capernaum, where Jesus had so often taught and done his mighty works on the Sabbath. They could see the boat-landings along the shore where Jesus had called fishermen to follow him. Within range of the eye as they looked backward upon the way they had climbed, was the grassy slope of the hill-side where Jesus had fed the five thousand, the higher ridge where he had spoken the words of blessing upon the poor, the meek, and the merciful, the steep bluff where he met the wild man from the tombs and sent him home restored to sound mind, the portion of the lake beneath

where he had stilled the tempest and walked on the water, and all around in many directions the solitudes of the hills where Jesus had often spent the whole night alone with his Father.

The whole country within sight on the west of the lake was alive with people and with the homely industries of the time. There was a population of millions where now the traveller finds only here and there at long intervals a cluster of mud cabins and a score or two of wretched families. In Christ's day, villages, gardens, vineyards, wheat-fields, mingled with oak groves, and castles crowning the high places, made the whole landscape as various and beautiful as any on which the sun of the morning shone.

And yet it was a sad review for Jesus and his disciples to make as they sat weary and resting in the olive shade, and looking back upon the scene of the last year's labor about the lake and among the hills of Galilee. In all those towns and villages Jesus had spoken the word of life with such grace and simplicity as no human teacher had ever shown. In the streets and houses and synagogues he had healed the sick, and restored the possessed, and raised the dead. In the open air on the hill-side he had fed the hungry and comforted the sorrowing, and preached the gospel of love and pity to the poor. He was known everywhere as the friend of the needy, the preacher of righteousness, the comforter of the afflicted. Never before in all the history of the world had men heard the truth spoken

with such grace and power and love, as all could see in the teaching of Jesus, whether he spoke in the private house, the synagogue, by the wayside or by the sea. He had cheered many dark homes; he had brought hope into many sad hearts, and he had kindled a light in that land which should shine to the ends of the earth. No one had ever found him harsh or unkind or forbidding. No one had ever come to him for help or sympathy and had been turned away.

And now Jesus was leaving the scene of his year's toil in teaching, because he had been so hindered and thwarted in his work by the envious rulers and the ignorant and passionate people that he could not carry it on. He must have looked back upon the lake-country when leaving it for heathen lands with some such feelings as he looked upon Jerusalem and wept over the doomed and blinded city. It was not at this time that he spoke words of woe upon Capernaum and the country about the lake. But the woe came, and it still lies heavy upon all the land where Jesus taught and did his mighty works in Galilee.

The traveller of to-day, who climbs the steep path that Jesus trod on his way to Tyre and the borders of the Gentiles, sees desolation and the shadow of death where Jesus and his disciples looked forth upon the homes of millions of people. The hills that were terraced to the top, and that were blooming like hanging-gardens all the way up, have been waiting a thousand years for the fruit-grower and the vine-dresser to return, but they are

still broken down by the winter rains, and burnt dry by the summer sun, and they never resound with the song of the vintage or the joy of the harvest. The beautiful valleys are mourning for the loss of the orchards of olive and fig, and the fertile plains are waiting in vain for the sower and the reaper. The wild oaks have covered Tabor in pity to hide its desolation, and the meek lilies and the crimson oleanders contend with thorns and thistles in the endeavor to give beauty to the deserted plain of Gennesaret, and to hide the broken columns and the blackened stones where Capernaum once stood.

Ascending the hill northward from the lake along the path that Jesus and his disciples took toward Tyre, we stop in many places and survey the whole landscape in every direction, and we see no human habitation. The whole region looks dangerous and terrible, as if every glen were haunted with robbers, and every hill-top were a perch for vultures watching their opportunity to swoop down upon the body of the murdered traveller as soon as the plunderers have done their work and gone. When we meet a solitary footman, he steals along in the distance, glancing quickly and nervously in every direction. He comes up looking wild and suspicious, with his hand upon his weapon, and he hurries by as if the avenger of blood were on his track.

Here and there unfenced portions of ground are rudely cultivated, olive trees are growing on the hill-sides, grain is at this season ready for the reaper. But the harvesters

are not seen. Their homes are far off. In the time of reaping they will come like soldiers foraging in a hostile country. They will stack their arms and pinion their horses by the wayside, set a sentinel to watch against surprise, gather up the grain hastily, and flee away, as if expecting pursuit. The land is afraid of itself. A strange and dismal terror creeps over one in passing through it, as though some mysterious and awful danger were haunting the unploughed field, and hovering around the wild mountain-tops.

And all this is just what we should expect as a consequence of the dreadful infatuation of the people of this land in rejecting Him who came to break every yoke and to bless every home. They shut their hearts against the true Prophet who taught them the way of life and peace. In the process of centuries, a false prophet came speaking lies, and him they received. And his word has been wasting the land and degrading the people for a thousand years, until now desolation reigns where happy millions once lived, and the country looks as if clothed in sackcloth and ashes where once it bloomed like a garden and brought forth abundantly But the lost glory will never come back to the land or the people until the false prophet is cast out, and supplication is made for the return of Him whose word in the old time hushed the storm, and whose power in a later day shook the walls of Tiberias with earthquake and made the sea boil as if fires were burning beneath.

From the noon-day rest in the olive shade over-

looking the lake and the landscape about it, Jesus and his disciples resumed their journey northward, refreshed in body by repose yet saddened in spirit by the review of all that they had left behind. The climb for the remainder of the afternoon was steep and long, like the ascent from Jericho to Jerusalem. The air, which was hot and stifling by the seaside even in the morning, grew sharp and piercing higher up, and before evening had come on, the whole company had girt their loose robes closely about them and yet were shivering with cold. At the going down of the sun they had reached the city set on a hill so high that it could be seen all over the country where Jesus had taught in southern Galilee. From that lofty outlook the lake seemed as if it were lying at the very feet of the observer, and he was tempted to listen for the stroke of the oars or the cry of the fishermen on the water. From thence they could survey the whole circuit of the sacred sea, the waving outline of hills sweeping around westward from Tabor to Carmel, the shadowy semblance of mountain forms fading away in the blue over Bashan and beyond Jordan, and still further to the north the snowy heights of Hermon reddening in the glow of the setting sun. And all this was the more impressive because seen through the thin summer haze which slightly veiled the rugged aspects of nature, and clothed them in softer hues without impairing the grace of forms that needed no veil to make them beautiful.

It was a great relief for the weary Master to spend the

night breathing the pure air of the mountain city, far away from the stifling stone cabins and exhausting heat of Capernaum. He entered the house where he lodged at a late hour of the evening that nobody might know of his coming, and he hasted away early in the morning that he might not be seen and followed by a multitude in the next day's journey. Moving on still towards the borders of Tyre, the little company descended a long, steep, winding path, and then passed on all day through green valleys and over wild hills and through cultivated fields. The country no longer had the bare and burnt appearance which is seen everywhere in southern Palestine when the summer sets in and the rains cease. Everything was green and every spot was teeming with vegetation.

In the course of this day's journey they crossed narrow, cultivated plains, and the ripened wheat waved around them in golden billows like the sea in the setting sun. They entered narrow valleys, and wild brooks came singing down the hill-sides to cheer them on their way, and bright flowers looked up beside their path and smiled. It was a long time since they had heard the sound of running water as they walked. They saw springs gushing out from the hill-sides, rushing down worn declivities of rock, leaping in light cascades from step to step of stairs made without hands. They passed villages embosomed in fig-orchards and vineyards, and they heard the happy voices of children playing in the olive groves beside the fountains.

The shade of sadness passed from the Master's face, and a gleam of tenderness and pity shone out from his kindled eye and kindly look as he called the little ones to him and took their hands in his for a few steps in his walk. That awful and glorious Prophet of Nazareth, before whom the raging winds were hushed and the demons of darkness were made to hold their peace, was ever tender and gentle toward little children. He smiled to see how much less the little ones feared him than did the full-grown men whom he met by the way. The peaceful homes and the bright fountains, the green gardens and vineyards, the happy voices of children in the villages, and the song of shepherds on the hills, made the weary Master feel rested in spirit and cheered for the toil which was yet to come.

The country through which they passed that day was teeming with inhabitants. Walled towns stood on the tops of high rounded hills, and the ascent from the plain was terraced and cultivated all the way up. The rough stones were hidden by vines, fig and pomegranate trees, and the little white town itself often looked like a rose wreathed in evergreens, and ready to receive its bouquet of flowers. Women were carrying water from the fountains in the valleys, and they made the air musical with their merry voices and loud laughter as they passed in long lines up the steep to the gate. Peasants were ploughing on hill-sides so steep that a misstep would send oxen and men headlong to the bottom of the valley. Eagles built their nests in the lofty cliffs,

and the parent bird, anxious for the safety of her young, "clasped the crag with hooked hands close to the sun," and watched and waited while the company of travellers passed in the bed of the valley below. The thin strata of limestone on each side of some of the narrow valleys lay one above another like the leaves of a book, and the front edge had been cut down so straight and smooth by the water-course that the leaves of nature's great stone book about the building of the world could be counted by hundreds from the bottom of the valley to the top of the cliff.

And so the Master went on and on, through winding valleys, over high, stony hills, down deep ravines, across fertile plains, talking with his disciples all the way, and telling them the great truths of life and duty in the forms that they could best understand. He did not labor ingeniously to show them how they could find sermons in the dumb stones and music in the running brooks. But he planted in their minds the seed of the divine word, which in after time should quicken the universal mind of men, open a thousand new avenues to knowledge and culture, and endow all forms and forces in nature with voices to show forth the praise of the one great Creator.

On the evening of their second day's walk towards Tyre, they came to another mountain city which had been guarded and fortified ever since the time when the Canaanite was in the land, and altars to the sun-god were kindled on the hills of the morning. And here, too, the wind was blowing fierce and strong; wild, torn

clouds came up from the Great Sea, and scudded across the sky as if flying in the van of a storm. The face of snowy Hermon shone white and cold through the dreamy haze in the East, and night came on murmuring and mournful, as night comes to wanderers in the desert or to sailors on the deep. And the sleep of that night was the sweeter to the weary Master because the sadness upon the face of nature was in sympathy with his own spirit, which still mourned for the ignorant and misguided multitudes left behind in the lake-towns, like sheep without a shepherd.

When the morning came the wind was still blowing from the sea, and the air was dim and dreamy with the haze of the night before. The people of the town looked wonderingly after the little company of travellers as they stole silently away before the sun could be seen through the silvery mist of the morning. They passed on over wild, rocky paths, ascending and descending with the waving lines of the hills and the valleys. The country, though rough and mountainous, was still well cultivated, and grain was growing in the stony fields. Women were drawing rain water from cisterns hewn deep in the solid rock. The houses in the little towns were strongly built, and the synagogue rose high above all the other buildings, with heavy walls, and pillars cut from the quarry by strong and skilful hands. The tombs and watering-troughs, the cisterns and burial-cases about the gates of cities, were all cut in stone. Before noon, they entered a deep, winding valley, and walked on for an

hour, following the course of the glen between precipices, fearfully high and steep, and over a stony path which was like the dry bed of water-courses in the desert. Small trees and shrubs grew out of crevices in the precipitous walls on either hand. Shepherds were leading their flocks in search of pasturage along the steep declivities, where goats halted and hesitated to follow until the voice of the leader cheered them on.

And now, passing through the low-built cities which Solomon gave to Hiram of Tyre, and which Hiram thought too mean to take as a gift, they came to a rougher country and a ruder people. It had long been the border land between Galilee and the Gentiles, and it was the more disorderly and desolate because for centuries two governments claimed it, and neither could make it entirely its own. The way on towards Tyre led through wild, robber-haunted valleys, along the slopes of brown, sun-burnt hills, over bleak, limestone ridges, among stones gathered out of the fields, and piled in heaps higher than the houses. Hard-featured and hard-handed women were out among the rocks gathering sticks and dead weeds that they might kindle a little fire and bake their bread in the ashes. Men, clothed in sheep-skins as shaggy as wild beasts, were setting shoots of olive and fig trees where they could find a few handfuls of earth among the brown, crumbling stones. Here and there a patch of ground big enough for a garden had been raked over by a rude plough, and wheat was growing mingled with many tares. The

paths were crooked, steep and stony. The houses of the people were clusters of stone cabins girt with rough walls on the crown of naked hills. Lean, half-grown cattle were climbing the hill-sides and looking for grass among the stones. Dark-winged vultures were hovering overhead, and looking down to see whether any wandering sheep or overladen beast of burden had given up the struggle to live in that stony, starveling world.

But this wild and stony region softened down into more gentle features before Jesus and his disciples came out in sight of Tyre and the Great Sea. The sun was sinking in the western wave as they were making the descent toward the plain and the fountains of the ancient city, when a woman came out from one of the stone-built towns hanging on the slope of the hills, and cried after the company, "Have mercy on me, O Lord, thou son of David." She had heard of the mighty works done by Jesus in Galilee, and she somehow suspected that this was the wonderful Prophet himself when she saw him passing with his disciples. The greatest affliction which could ever come upon a mother's heart was hers, and she thought that this friend of all the poor and needy would surely have mercy on her and take away the cause of her grief, or help her to bear it bravely. As if her own lot had not been made hard enough by poverty and oppression from man, a demon messenger had been sent by the prince of darkness to haunt her wretched home and to take possession of her own daughter. And she cried for help to him who came to

destroy the works of the destroyer and let the oppressed go free. But Jesus answered her not a word. He kept on in his walk toward Tyre as if he had not heard the distracted woman at all.

To the disciples who witnessed this scene the silence and apparent indifference of their Master must have seemed more wonderful than any words they had ever heard him speak. They knew that he had come to seek and to save the lost. He had many times so said himself. And yet here was a suppliant who had come to him unsought, and she was left to cry as if unheard. It was his especial mission to show mercy to the afflicted, and to bring help to the needy; and here was one burdened and heart-broken, crying to him in an agony of earnestness and sorrow, and he gave her no answer. He had been travelling from city to city all over Galilee to find out the poor and to help the suffering. He had taught them on the mountain, in the synagogue, and by the sea. He had fed them in the desert, and healed them in the highway, and comforted them in the houses. And now he was silent in the presence of one whose heart and home had been made wretched by one great and crushing grief. He had said, Come unto me, all ye that are weary and heavy-laden, and I will give you rest. And here was one worn out with carrying the heavy burden of sorrow, coming to him and asking rest from grievous torments, and she got no answer but silence, and no encouragement to repeat her cry.

The disciples were weary with their day's walk, and

were never disposed to be more patient or pitiful than their Master. But they gathered about him and besought him to grant the woman's request, whatever it was, and send her away, for her cry was very troublesome. He had healed hundreds of others without waiting to be asked, and they did not see why he need deny this poor mother who was so importunate in her supplications for her daughter. When Jesus broke the silence he did not speak to the woman herself, whose heart was breaking to get a kindly word. He only reminded his disciples that the suppliant belonged to a people upon whom the voice of the Most Merciful had pronounced the sentence of extermination from of old, and that he was not sent unto the lost of that doomed and darkened race.

The woman heard the answer given to the disciples and took it to herself. But instead of yielding to discouragement, she came near and cast herself down in the path at the feet of Jesus, so that he must either stop, or step aside or step over her in passing on, and then taking her daughter's affliction to herself as if it were all her own, she cried—Lord, help me. And then, stranger still, in the first word which Jesus addressed to her he spoke as if the woman were to be classed with dogs that are only beaten if they bark for children's bread. She accepted at once the lowly position assigned her and only asked that crumbs, which dogs receive, might be given to appease her hunger.

And by such perseverance in prayer, such heroism

in faith, such lowliness in humility, she won at last. The power of the Master's word was given her to use as she would. She had only to say what she wanted and it should be all her own. Her daughter was healed from that hour, and her wretched home seemed like heaven to mother and child when the sun sank in the western sea that night. And the victory gained by that woman of Canaan under sore discouragement is written in the record of ages, that the fearful and the afflicted in all time and to the ends of the earth may take courage and believe.

The merciful silence of Jesus says as with ten thousand tongues, Never doubt, never despair; follow up your first failure in right-doing with another attempt. In the warfare of faith it is better to try and fail, than win without effort. The faith which keeps down doubt and fear only by hard fighting is best worth fighting for. There are still many kinds of evil possession in our hearts and in the world which go not out save by continual prayer and sore fasting. Many are still called to fight after the manner of men with the wild beasts of passion and appetite and temptation. Let all such take courage in the darkest hour, and remember that faith is almighty for the accomplishment of anything that faith may need to do.

The Holy Mount.

After six days Jesus taketh Peter, James, and John his brother, and bringeth them up into a high mountain apart.—MATT. xvii. 1.

X.

THE HOLY MOUNT.

THE earthly ministry of our Lord is set before us in the four-fold gospel under three aspects of profound and commanding interest to all readers of the sacred story—the mighty works, the daily teaching, and the divine suffering. By this three-fold testimony Jesus is declared to be the Son of God, the Saviour of men, the Sovereign of worlds. He is proved to be Lord of nature by the ease with which he healed the sick, and hushed the storm, and raised the dead. He shows himself to be above all human teachers by speaking in advance of all ages, and uttering things kept secret from the foundation of the world. He shows us what no teaching could ever have told us of God's love by taking our suffering to himself and making it divine.

His mighty works made men wonder, and fear, and rejoice as if they had stood in the presence of the awful and infinite God. His clear, calm, gentle words of truth and life were clothed with such authority as the wisest and mightiest of men could never assume. His uncomplaining, unresisting submission to suffering and death completed his work, and crowned it with glory. The world had never seen infinite majesty in a form so meek, in a condition so low. The world had never known a teacher who could put the most sublime and

sacred truths into such clear and simple forms that common people would understand and hear them gladly. Among all the patriots, heroes, and martyrs of the olden time there had not been one who, like Jesus, had full power over life and death, and who yet consented to die that others might live.

The mighty works would have excited wonder and curiosity, but they would have been without meaning if they had not been unfolded and enforced by the divine word. Even the perfect life would have been a still greater mystery, if it had not been crowned and completed by the sacrificial death. Sight was given to blind eyes, that truth might enter darkened souls. The cross was borne by the King, that his subjects might share his crown. The great mystery of a suffering Messiah was what the disciples found it hardest to understand, what the world has ever been slow of heart to receive. The awful glory of the transfiguration was undoubtedly displayed before the foremost and favorite three to keep alive their feeble faith in him as the Christ, the Son of the living God, when once he had begun to teach them that he must be rejected of men and crucified at Jerusalem.

He had extended his journeyings northward to the utmost boundaries of Galilee. The long walk over the highlands on the east of the Jordan and the waters of Merom had brought him to the fountains of the sacred river, and had set him down under the shadow of Hermon, in the Roman city of Cæsarea Philippi. Out of the

reach of spies and accusers that lay in wait for him about Capernaum, with nothing to fear from Jew or Roman, he takes this opportunity to make the terrible announcement to his devoted followers that he must yet go back to Jerusalem and give himself up to mockery and death. His hour will come, and no human hand can stay its approach. The sacrifice had been appointed from the foundation of the world, and it must be made, though heaven and earth should pass away. And this declaration was the more dark and afflicting to his disciples because it followed immediately upon the strong assurance that he was indeed the Messiah of the prophets, the Deliverer of Israel, the Son of the living God.

He had just told them in the most solemn and positive terms that he would establish his kingdom in the earth so firmly that the gates of hell should not prevail against it. He had pronounced Peter blessed because the foremost and impulsive disciple, speaking for all the rest, had said that Jesus was the Christ of God. He had declared that confession of Peter to have been inspired by a revelation from his Father, and he had promised to make it the key to all mysteries and the arbiter of all destinies in heaven and earth. He himself had claimed the crown and accepted the homage which can be rightly given only to God's divine and eternal Son.

And now he says that he must go back to Jerusalem; he must be delivered into the hands of wicked men; he

must submit to shame and torture; he must be mocked as a king and be crucified as a slave. Now he rebukes Peter with the most awful severity because the ardent disciple ventures to express the strong assurance that no such dreadful thing shall come upon his beloved Master. The very disciple who had just been called blessed, to whom had been made the great revelation of the true Messiah, whose confession should be the rock foundation of the everlasting church, even he is told by Jesus to get behind him, as if the sight of him were hateful because he had tried to dispel the dark foreboding of his Master. After having excited their hopes to the highest pitch, he even goes on to tell them that they too must bear the cross and suffer shame, or they can never share his glory. His own suffering must be completed in them, and his crucifixion to the world must be perpetuated in the experience of his disciples for all time.

Jesus was now far out of the range of his ordinary work and ministry. Once only had he gone so far north, and that was when he came into the coasts of Tyre and Sidon. He was at the Roman city Cæsarea Philippi when he made the startling disclosures concerning his rejection at Jerusalem and his death by crucifixion. Everything about him indicated the prevalence of heathen power and superstition. Just back of the town the chief fountain of the Jordan burst forth out of a cave beneath a projecting spur of the mountain. It was pretended that the cave was the abode of a god

who presided over springs and forests and mountains. Shrines and altars and images were carved on the face of the cliffs, and offerings were constantly made by the people to propitiate the favor of the divinity that was supposed to dwell in the dark abode. Priests waved mystic wands and muttered meaningless incantations, and watched the stars from the hills, and lay all night on the stone floor of the cavern, and listened to the moaning wind and the roaring waters, in hope of finding out the secrets of human destiny or of making the ignorant believe that they had power over the unseen world. Far up on the mountain, back of the town, there were temples and altars for the worship of the sun-god, and the high places for heathen sacrifice were in sight all about the city. There were idols in the public squares and at the corners of the streets. A day's journey northward the highest ridge of the mountain was named Hermon, and on that was the most ancient and sacred of all the places of heathen sacrifice.

It would have been altogether out of the ordinary course of our Lord's ministry for him to make the most awful and dazzling manifestation of his glory among high places so completely given up to the images and altars of idolatrous worship. When carrying on his work about the sea of Galilee, there is no record that he ever entered the city of Tiberias, where Herod had set up the ensigns of heathen power and superstition. And Cæsarea Philippi was much more of a pagan city, and the whole region was much more given up to

idolatrous worship. And that alone is a sufficient reason why we should look for the scene of the transfiguration among the hills of Galilee, rather than among the high places given up to the worship of Baal and Pan, and all the gods of the Greek, Roman, and Phœnician mythology.

We are not told into what particular high mountain Jesus brought up his three favorite disciples apart, that they might see his glory. But for the sake of locating and giving reality to the great transaction, we are at liberty to chose the most conspicuous among the many high places about the sea of Galilee, and in the region of his daily walks and mighty works. But it is not in keeping with the gospel story that we should go far away to Hermon on the north, among heathen shrines and the high places of Baal, to find the holy mount where the voice of God the Father came from the excellent glory, and the entranced disciples were eye-witnesses of the majesty of the beloved Son.

When Jesus came down from the mount and healed the lunatic child, he passed quietly along his old walks in Galilee and came to Capernaum, and he desired nothing to be said about the mighty work which he had done, or the vision of glory which the three had seen. But he would have had no occasion for such concealment of the miracle if he had been away to the north among the heathen shepherds of Hermon, or the Romanised people of Cæsarea Philippi. They knew little and cared less about Jesus and his works. It was

because the healing of the lunatic child at the foot of the mount of the Transfiguration took place in the midst of the scenes where Christ had lived and taught so long, and where people were greatly moved about his ministry, that he must needs steal away silently from the excited crowd and make his way along by-paths down to Capernaum, letting no man know whither he went.

As we have said, it was in the neighborhood of Cæsarea Philippi that Jesus made for the first time the most startling disclosures to his bosom-friends concerning his rejection by the elders and his death at Jerusalem. Six days passed, and to the disciples they were days of doubt and deep perplexity of mind. They had many reasonings with themselves as they turned their backs upon the pagan mountain and the Roman city of the north, and set forth on the journey southward toward Judea and Jerusalem, where shame and death awaited their beloved Lord. Their course led them across the head of the great marshy plain in which the waters of Merom lie low between the parted highlands of Bashan on the east, and the hills of Naphtali on the west.

When they went out of Cæsarea they walked upon pavements, the blocks of which still lie where they were placed at Herod's command. They passed temples and baths and palaces adorned with columns and arches, and finished in the highest style of Roman art. The Master's face must have been saddened with the forecasting shadows of the future when he saw the cruel

circus where, forty years afterward, Titus would compel the wretched captives from Jerusalem to fight with wild beasts, or with each other, "to make a Roman holiday" for the people of that luxurious and profligate city. They descended to the plain beside the running brook, which still sings in the olive shade and sparkles in the sunlight as it sung and shone when Jesus passed by.

Half way over to the western side of the great marsh-plain, they passed the ill-omened, robber-haunted hill of Dan, raised up from the low level as if it had been built for a fortification by human hands. They heard the rushing sound of waters that broke forth from the base of the mound and went rejoicing on their way among rushes and oleanders to fertilize the plain. Peradventure the mighty oak that stands there to-day, as a landmark to be sighted for long distances up and down the valley, is the representative of one that covered Jesus and his disciples with its kindly shade as they paused to rest beside the fountain, and to shelter themselves from the noonday heat. Dan, the utmost boundary on the north of the land commonly named holy, was haunted then, as it is still, by memories of blood and robbery and idol-worship, all the way down from the days of Abraham and Joshua and Jeroboam. And the little band of the disciples, as they sat in the shade of the great oak beside the fountain, were reminded of the night-attack of Abraham upon the camp of plunderers for the rescue of Lot at that same fountain. They recalled the graven image which the Danites stole from Micah on Mount

Ephraim, and carried away to their new northern home and made for it a house of gods. They knew the story of the golden calf which the apostate king set on that hill for all the northern tribes to worship. And the hearts of the disciples were the more saddened in recalling the dark times of old, because they were losing hope in the reign of a king who should establish his throne in righteousness and peace.

As they went on down the western side of the great meadow, they saw the tall, white-breasted, black-winged pelicans walking gracefully and delicately about the grass and the grain-fields, as if they owned the whole territory, and were going out to inspect the crops and direct the work of the laborers. Overhead in the fierce sunlight, long-winged eagles soared high and leisurely, wheeling in circles round and round, sometimes sending off messengers to other companies in the distance, and then breaking up their ranks and joining other circles and beginning another series of evolutions in the pathless fields of air.

Running brooks came singing down the hill-sides and crossed their pathway as they walked, and went out to fertilize the plain where sowers were scattering seed, and harvesters were gathering grain at the same time. Vast herds of white-faced, black cattle were sweeping along slowly, half hidden by the tall grass, feeding under the care of keepers; and black goats as numerous were climbing the mountain sides under the care of shepherds. Travellers, armed with long spears

or rude swords and walking swiftly with bare feet and carrying burdens, met them all along the road. Dark-visaged, half-naked men rose up out of the mud ditches which they were digging, and stared at them with sullen looks and suspicious gestures as they passed. Naked children, with matted hair and blear eyes, stood by their mothers in the doors of reed cabins, showing in their sallow, sickly looks the effects of living in low, damp cabins and breathing pestilential air. Black buffaloes were dragging the rude plough or were lying half buried in the black mud, looking as wild and evil-eyed as their naked drivers. Bright red wind-flowers mingled with the white daisies and yellow marigolds, relieving a little the barren monotony of the plain and foreshadowing to Jesus by the name they would bear in after times the blood of the cross.

All these things are seen by the traveller as he passes to-day along the same path that Jesus trod with his disciples, and all must have been seen by him. He walked in the hot sun, where we find it weariness to ride. He rested at noon and at night in the dark, floorless cabins such as the people live in to-day. He heard the cry of jackals from the hill-sides, and the call of shepherds and herdsmen from the plain. He met the naked men and he was stared at by the squalid children. Did he give the evil-looking men the salutation of peace as he passed? Did he lay his hands on the wretched children and bless them? Did the storm-cloud already gathering and soon to burst over the

whole land cast its shadow upon his spirit, and sadden his soul with that great sorrow which weighed him down when he wept over doomed Jerusalem? Was he more silent, more apart from his disciples, more tender, more thoughtful on this last journey, because he knew that every step was bringing him nearer to the cross?

We can only guess what answer to give to these and a thousand such questions. But it makes all sights and sounds along this wild path to-day doubly interesting when we think that Jesus saw what we see, he heard what we hear, he felt the heat of the day and the weariness of travel just as we do. And he entered into all these low and common conditions of life, that he might show how closely we may walk with God in the humblest path, and what noble work we can do for God, in the lowliest occupation.

The second day's walk southward from Cæsarea Philippi brought Jesus and his disciples in sight of the sea of Galilee. They had passed the great battle-field where Joshua fell suddenly upon the camp of the Canaanite kings, and smote them till he left them none remaining. They had rested beside a fountain under a hill where Jael drove the tent-pin into the temples of Sisera, whose chariots and horsemen had been scattered at the Kishon before the impetuous charge of Barak from Mount Tabor. They had passed the well and the pit which the false legends of later times would make the scene of the selling of Joseph by his brethren. And now for the last hour of the day, as

the sun was going down they were fully in view of the sacred sea on the shores of which Jesus had begun and was soon to close his ministry. They could see the blue water through the hazy air, lying low at the base of green hills and girt around by bright villages, and the busy homes of men. They had left the paganism and the Pan-worship of Hermon far behind, and they were now coming into the region where multitudes could testify their indebtedness to the healing power of Jesus, and thousands could count it a joy and an honor to receive him to their homes.

We picture the gentle and loving Master returning again, and for the last time, to his old, familiar walks, and to the shores of the sacred sea, whose waves had felt his step, and whose winds had hushed at his command. He surveys the whole scene with such a look of tenderness and pity as he turned upon Jerusalem, when he lamented its blindness and foretold its desolation. These hill-side paths are all familiar to his eye, for he has trodden them again and again. These wild mountain ridges recall to him the many nights that he has spent in their solitudes alone with his Father. These grassy slopes, descending towards the sea, are the open-air sanctuaries where he has often fed the multitude and spoken to them the words of life. In all these clustering villages by the lakeside, on the high places and in the valleys, he has healed the sick and comforted the sorrowing, and preached the gospel to the poor. If the people knew that he were returning

from his northern journey, they would come out by thousands to meet him and to escort him to his home.

He knows all this and he lays it all deeply to heart, and yet an unusual sadness comes over him, and he walks on in advance of his disciples, silent and sorrowful, and they dare not speak to him. They are amazed at the wrapt and intense expression which they see on the face of Jesus; but they know not its meaning, and they follow on and are afraid. They think some dark presentiment of coming death has fallen upon the mind of the Master, but they remember how sharply he had rebuked Peter for having attempted to dissipate the cloud of coming sorrow, and they do not dare to interrupt his silence or to offer him their sympathy.

He does not lead them down to their old home at Capernaum, but turns aside into some of the more retired villages, and he seems anxious not to have it known that he has returned to his old walks in Galilee. The disciples become more and more troubled at the strange conduct of their Master. Their minds have been dazzled and allured by the glory and riches which they hoped to enjoy with him in his earthly kingdom. And they have not yet renounced all hope that he may prove himself to be the Son of the Highest, the Redeemer of Israel. And yet all the while he is moving on voluntarily to meet the doom which would be ruin to all their hopes, and grief to all of their hearts. If he must be rejected and put to shame; if after all his mighty works he must submit to crucifixion and death,

then surely there can be nothing left for them but unutterable disappointment and despair.

And now the time has come when the disciples must receive some additional testimony to the Messiahship of their beloved Master, or they will lose all faith in his divine mission; they will no longer look to him as the one who is to redeem Israel. The time has come when they must see his glory and majesty, and hear his divine Sonship proclaimed in such a manner as no king or conqueror was ever proclaimed to the world.

He has spent two or three days more in going about upon his old walks in Galilee, and he has come to one of the many villages on the west of the lake to seek lodgings for the night. The evening shadows are lengthening in the valleys, and the sun has sunk behind the hills that stand as a wall around his Nazareth home. The laborers are gathering in from the vineyards and the fields, bringing ploughs and pruning-hooks on their shoulders. Weary travellers are on the last stages of their day's journey, and bleating flocks are returning to the folds on the grassy slopes of Tabor and the rocky ridges of Gilboa. The heights of Hermon, that rose above them rugged and cold a week ago, are now reddening far away at the north in the glow of the setting sun. The mount of the Beatitudes points its two horns in dark outline on the eastern sky, and Carmel casts its lengthening shadows far up the plain of Jezreel. The deep silence that settles down upon the solitude of nature, and the subdued murmur of voices that comes up

from the villages at the close of the day, equally invite to retirement, meditation and prayer.

And now the Master calls the three favorite disciples to himself with that look of confidence and deep thoughtfulness which they had always seen in his face when some great crisis in his ministry was at hand. They follow him silently as he makes his way out of the little town and directs his steps across the open fields and the wild pasture-land towards the ascent of a mountain that stands apart as if enthroned and crowned among the hills. It is a rounded and dome-like elevation, looking on one side as if it had been blown up from the bosom of the plain, as bubbles are blown on the sea, and on the other side looking as if it were the loftiest among countless billows, into which the earth had been wrought by some mighty tempest in far-distant time. The morning cloud lingers on the summit when the mist rises from the low-lying sea, and the light of the setting sun rests upon its green woods and bare ledges long after it has left the plain below.

The path first leads through waving fields of golden grain and long breadths of red and brown earth freshly turned by the plough, for the people of the land plough and reap at the same season. The seed for a second harvest is sown while the reapers are gathering the sheaves of one already ripe. A little way up the ascent vines and olives cover the terraces of limestone and earth, and the more hardy fig finds a foothold upon the soil amid piles of bare stones. When the slope grows

steeper, thick forests of oak and terebinth conceal the Master and his disciples.

The ascent is not difficult for men who are accustomed to the rough paths of Palestine, and who start fresh in the morning. But Jesus has spent the day in travel and in teaching, and this mountain climb at its close adds a heavy weight to the weariness that demanded rest before the evening came. His hand has lifted the burden of pain and infirmity from many shoulders, and his word has sent the thrill of life into many a worn and weary frame. But he himself is as much fatigued with the steep ascent as the impetuous Peter or the gentle and swift-footed John. He came into the world to bring rest to the weary, and he draws the hearts of such to accept his offered help by taking his place by their side and climbing the mountain of difficulty and temptation, step by step, with only such strength as they can command.

His disciples dare not ask whither he is going, or why he leads them away to the solitude of the mountain just as night is setting in, and they all need repose and protection in the homes which they have left behind. They have known him many times to spend the whole night in desert places or upon lonely mountains in prayer. And they do not now need to ask him for what purpose he leads them forth from the restless crowd or the quiet homes of men at the evening hour. They go because he asks their company. And yet they think it strange that he must needs add this lonely

watching in the chill air of night to the weariness and exhaustion of the day. The dew on the mountain is so heavy that water drips from the boughs of trees in the morning as if it had rained. The temperature at this season runs up to a hundred at noon in the shade, and it falls forty degrees between midnight and sunrise. It is a fearful exposure to pass from the fiery heat of noon to the damp and chill of night, and to lie down without covering upon the wet grass under the open heavens until the sun returns again with its burning heat. Peter thinks his Master beside himself, and he would tell him so if he had not been so recently rebuked and silenced for obtruding his advice when it was not wanted.

They reach the utmost height, and look forth upon the world which they have left behind. It has taken them but an hour to make the ascent, and the mellowed light of day still rests upon the whole landscape. It is a goodly sight to behold, and such an one as cannot be seen elsewhere in all the Holy Land. Far away in the west glimpses of the Mediterranean can be caught through depressions in the hills, and the waves glow like molten gold where the sun is just sinking beneath the watery horizon. Northeast, Tiberias, the gem of seas, lies deepset among hills, with a changing border of crimson tints and purple shadows. It is now calm and smooth, as if sleeping beneath the spell of the mighty word that spoke peace to its stormy waves. Northward, the snows of still loftier mountains look like altar-fires burning unto the midst of heaven.

Nearer, within the sweep of the eye, is the mount of Beatitudes, on which Jesus opened the ministry of reconciliation with blessings upon the poor, the meek, and the merciful. Eastward, the highlands of Gilead and Bashan rise in waving ridges and rounded domes like the surface of a stormy sea. Southward winds a silvery haze, marking the course where the swift Jordan rushes down its deep and rocky bed. North of west, Carmel pushes out its bold headland into the sea, clothed with the excellency of the forest, and lifting itself up like an altar for the evening sacrifice, as in the day when the priests of Baal cried in vain to the sun-god to kindle his own offering, and the fire of the Lord fell at the word of Elijah.

From the high place where Jesus stands under the oaks looking towards the sunset, they can see the road where the prophet ran before the chariot of Ahab, in the face of a driving storm, all the way up the vale of Esdraelon from Carmel to the entrance of Jezreel. The winding Kishon lies like a ribbon of silver among the russet harvest-fields through the whole length of the great valley. On the left is the wild hill-track along which doomed and despairing Saul rode by night from Endor, where he had been to seek forbidden knowledge, to Gilboa, where he went to fight and to die. Over behind a rocky, cone-like hill are the harvest-fields, where the only child of the hospitable Shunamite received a sun-stroke while following the reapers, and behind the hill, out of sight, are the stone houses of the town, where

Elisha found the dead child upon his own bed in the chamber on the wall, and raised him to life. Just across the green valley, looking as if it were only a stone's throw off, is the little village of Nain, where Jesus had stopped the funeral procession on the way to the grave, and had restored the dead son alive to his mother. Nazareth, where the Divine Life was hidden from the world for thirty years, lies low in its mountain valley, just in the direction of the sunset. And a little way to the right is Cana, embosomed in orchards of figs and pomegranates, and reclined on the slope of a hill, consecrated forevermore as the place where Jesus manifested forth his glory by the beginning of his miracles.

Plains of the greatest fertility, scenes of the deepest historic interest, a hill-country crowded with the greatest number of inhabitants, mountains of the wildest and most desolate grandeur, lie within the range of the landscape over which the eye sweeps from the one solitary height where Jesus goes with his three favored disciples to spend the night in prayer. The whole region round, in every direction, is full of cities and villages where Jesus has preached the gospel and performed his mighty works. There are no pagan temples for idol worship on the high places, as upon Hermon, no shrines dedicated to false gods in the valleys or beside the fountains, as at Cæsarea Philippi. Of all places in the whole land, this is the most fitting for Christ to show forth his glory in such manner as his disciples had never seen it before, for the confirmation of their faith in him as the

Son of God. Far better might this be called the "Holy Mount" than the heights where Baal and Ashtoreth and Moloch have been worshipped with cruel and shameless rites for ages.

This holy mountain rises in serene and gentle majesty above all the hills, not like the cold heights of Hermon crowned with snow, not like the bald and jagged cliffs of Sinai desolate and dreadful, but clothed with verdure and beauty, and looking upon a most living landscape, green with the gardens and bright with the homes of men. It is a fitting throne for the Ancient of Days when he bows the heavens, and comes down not in thunder and darkness and tempest, but with the still small voice, and with the light of a glory so mild and peaceful as to make the place seem both homelike and heavenly to men, and to call forth the prayer from their hearts to be permitted to build tabernacles and abide there forever. This holy mountain is high enough to lift the devout and thoughtful into communion with the pure and peaceful heavens, and yet it is lowly enough to take up with it the toiling and the weary whose fields are about its base, and whose rest is beneath its shadow.

Transfiguration.

He was transfigured before them, and his raiment became shining, exceeding white as snow.—MARK vii. 2, 3.

XI.

TRANSFIGURATION.

THE sun has sunk behind the waving ridge of Carmel, and the purple veil of evening, with a bright fringe of crimson and gold, is slowly ascending in the east. The thin haze which slightly obscured the landscape at noon has now melted into pure air, and the oak groves, the green valleys and the distant hills present as clear an outline as they did before sunset. One white star shines tremulously in the track of the sun, and yet it is still all bright day toward the west. The silence, the deep calm that seems to come down out of heaven upon the weary earth, invites the Master and his three favorite disciples to rest and contemplation as they reach the summit and seek a place of shelter from the evening dews under the ancient oaks which crown the height. To one who has been surrounded all day by clamorous voices and excited people, and who has been exhausted with continual talking to dull and unappreciative hearers, this high place might well seem like the mountains of Paradise, and this hour like a foretaste of heaven. Over such an one the pitying heavens would seem to bend in silent benediction, and the dear mother earth would lift up to him her gentle, soothing whisper of peace.

But, not to gaze on the landscape which we might

travel half round the globe to see; not to rest after long and exhausting toil; not to escape impending danger does Jesus seek this mountain solitude. He is there to be alone with his favorite disciples and with his Father. There is an ancient stronghold and a cluster of houses occupying a part of the height, but the space on the rounded dome is large, and the oak groves that climb all the way up to the summit afford the Master a better opportunity for retirement than he found on his last night of prayer in Gethsemane. And the vision of glory which is to come and to cover the mount with its exceeding brightness, is for him and for his disciples alone to see. If there had been an army garrisoned in the fort or a thousand people sleeping in the houses on that night, they would not have seen the great light or heard the heavenly voice any more than the servant of Elisha saw the chariots of fire and horses of fire at Dothan, until his eyes were opened in answer to the prayer of the prophet. It was only given to those whose eyes were opened and whose ears were unstopped to see the heavenly visitants, and to hear the voice from the excellent glory. To all other eyes the mountain was wrapt in the shadow of night; to all other ears there was silence in its shadowy groves as of the dead.

And this night on the holy mount is to Jesus like many others which he had spent alone with his Father on the high places about Nazareth and the sea of Galilee, only in this case he has three of his disciples with him, that they may be eye-witnesses of his majesty. If

ten thousand eyes of worldly men were on him here as the shades of night close round him, they would see nothing but the same homeless wanderer who for three years has been going about the country teaching and comforting others, but without a house of his own, and dependent on charity for a place to lay his head. On this holy mount he has no bed but the bare earth. The dew falls like rain all night, and the morning wind will sweep the mountain from the north with the chill of snow in its blast.

To this place apart on the high mountain the Man of sorrows goes to spend the night in prayer. And as his supplication continues hour after hour, with strong crying and many tears, the disciples grow weary with watching and fall asleep. They have not been teaching and healing the sick all day. They have only followed the steps of Jesus and listened to his words. But they are so tired with the long walk of the day and the evening climb of the mountain that their eyes are heavy, and they cannot keep awake. The midnight passes, and they sleep on, forgetful of their waking and agonizing Master.

He has told them of the great woe which will come upon him before another summer begins. He is now making his last journey with them to Jerusalem, and in the distance he sees the shadow of the cross coming nearer every hour. But the disciples have not seen it. They have only tried to divert his mind from such gloomy anticipations by telling him that no such thing

can ever come upon him. And now, when he has taken the favorite three aside, that they may watch with him while he prays for strength to meet the terrible conflict, they sleep as they afterwards slept in Gethsemane, leaving him to bear his great agony alone. Their indifference must have been the more distressing to him for the reason that he was praying especially for such a manifestation of his glory before their eyes as would heal their unbelief and help them to be reconciled to the humiliation and death which awaited him at Jerusalem.

But the mighty Mediator is not left to pray unheard, nor is he without watchers when his disciples sleep. To eyes that have been opened to the spiritual reality of things behind the earthly shadow, it would seem as if the golden gates of heaven had been thrown wide, and the splendor of the eternal throne had been poured upon the holy mount. The lowly suppliant is clothed with a glory above the brightness of the sun. No longer prostrate in an agony of prayer, he seems to sit enthroned amid the radiance of light ineffable. His countenance wears the aspect of serene and godlike majesty, and his garments shine like the drifted snow beneath the noonday sun.

The sleeping disciples are wakened, and their eyes are quickened with spiritual vision that they may see the flood of glory crowning and encompassing their beloved Lord. Gazing with wonder and terror upon the shining robes and the changed countenance of Jesus, they see now that he is not alone. When they walked with Jesus

by the way, when they sailed with him in the ship, when they sat with him in the house, his glory was veiled, so that he seemed to them only as one of the sons of men. Now, for the first time, the indwelling light is permitted to shine out from the person of the divine Lord, so that the disciples see it, and are amazed by the sight. He is no greater, no more glorious now than when climbing the mountain, weary and sorrowful, at sunset. The splendor with which he is clothed has not come to him from afar. But he lifts the veil for a few moments, and shows himself in his real character to his disciples, that they may see his glory and not lose faith in his divine person, when they see him by and by covered with shame and submitting to the cross.

So in all the walks which Jesus took with his disciples, in all the houses where he rested with them, he had higher companionship than theirs. The legions of the heavenly host were ever at his call. The blessed of earth who had passed into the promised rest were ever watching and waiting for the accomplishment of his mission. But now for the first time the disciples are permitted to see the forms and hear the voices of spiritual attendants that keep company with their Lord. The great lawgiver of Israel with whom Jehovah talked as friend with friend amid the thunders and the darkness of Sinai, the mighty prophet, before whom kings trembled and nations were smitten with dismay, have come down from their high seats in bliss to pay their homage to their King. They talk with him of the appointed

completion of his mission at Jerusalem as a thing known to them and waited for with intense expectation by the inhabitants of heaven. Somehow strangely the disciples see at once on awaking from sleep that it is Moses and Elijah with whom Jesus speaks. They are filled with surprise that these ancient worthies are fully aware of the awful tragedy of the cross, the announcement of which from the lips of the Master had so greatly tasked their faith and afflicted their hearts.

And the disciples are not less surprised at the appearance of the two mighty men of the olden time. They had talked of Elijah as a man of terrible aspect, the glance of whose eye was sufficient to make guilty men think that he had come as a minister of vengeance to call their sins to mind before God. They had often looked out upon Carmel where Elijah made his great sacrifice, and the fire of heaven fell upon the altar, and the priests of Baal were slain at the foot of the mount by the Kishon, and they supposed that when the mighty prophet returned again to earth it would be in some great and terrible day of the Lord, and that fire would go before him to consume his adversaries as in the time of old. But now, in the awful messenger before whom apostate kings trembled, the disciples only see one whose silent look should be enough to turn the hearts of fathers and children unto each other in tenderness and love. Nine hundred years of the life of heaven had made the prophet of fire like the mightiest of the angel host in power, gentleness and love.

The disciples had heard much of Moses, the great lawgiver of Israel. They had thought of him as a man of awful aspect, hidden with God amid the thunders and the thick darkness of Sinai. They had supposed that common men, like themselves, could not look on his face without fear and trembling. And now, on this other holy mount, to their surprise, they see the man Moses with a face like that of their Master, full of light and peace, so gentle, so human, so strong, that little children would run to him with confidence and affection. Fifteen hundred years of the blessed life have not made him old. So many centuries of converse with God in the habitations of light have only made him more human, more like what every man would wish to be in strength and joy and victory.

The disciples are confused and bewildered by the sudden waking and by the wonderful vision. They know not what to say, and yet Peter, as usual, feels that he must say something. And so he speaks, as if half in sleep and half awake. He repeats substantially, in a milder form, the suggestion for which he had already been severely rebuked by the meek and gentle Master. He proposes that Jesus shall remain at a safe distance from the dangers of Jerusalem and the death of the cross, and set up his throne for the government of the world upon that holy mount, and inaugurate his earthly reign with the splendors with which they are surrounded.

And while he is yet speaking the awful cloud of the

Shechinah's glory, that went before the tribes in the wilderness, overshadows them, and out of the cloud comes the divine voice which had spoken from the tabernacle of Moses and from the temple of Solomon. It sets at naught the weakness and the vanity of all human counsel, and commands attention to the supreme source of wisdom and authority, saying,—"This is my beloved Son. Hear him." And with that first and final lesson for the interpretation of all mysteries and the attainment of all faith, the vision passes. When the disciples, smitten to the ground by the terror of the voice from the excellent glory, lift up their eyes again, they see no man, but Jesus only.

The morning breaks upon the mountain with all the splendors of the Eastern clime, but its brightness is less than the vision of the night which the favored disciples have been permitted to behold. The returning day reveals a world of sin and suffering where Jesus must resume the work of instruction and mercy. The mountain seems like heaven to the entranced disciples. They would gladly stay there, fasting and waiting all day, for another night, if the vision would come again; if again they can hear the voices of the blessed immortals talking with Jesus. But the earth is moaning beneath in its sorrow and darkling in its sin, and they must go down from the heavenly vision and kindle its light in the homes of men. They must repeat the voice which they have heard from the excellent glory until all the nations hear it and are glad. They have heard the

divine Sonship of their Master proclaimed on the holy mount, and now they must go down and follow him in patience and faith to the cross and the grave, that they may also share with him in the crown and the blessed life.

The three disciples who were called to witness and to record the extraordinary scene on the mount of the Transfiguration had a three-fold fitness for their high mission. Peter was ardent, impulsive, passionate, quick to catch impressions, bold to declare them, manly to confess his mistake when wrong, and courageous to defend his convictions when right. James was slow, cautious, distrustful, never satisfied with anything short of the most literal and matter-of-fact evidence. John was dreamy, meditative, emotional, governed by feeling more than by reason, understanding dark things with the heart more than with the mind. And these three men, combining grave deliberation with quick and fiery impulse and deep spiritual insight, were there to witness the divine majesty of Jesus on the mount, and to hear from the excellent glory the voice proclaiming him to be the Son of God.

Jesus of Nazareth, the meek and lowly Teacher who for two and a half years has been going to and fro a homeless wanderer through all the land, is disclosed on the holy mount as the Son of the Highest. To him the patriarchs and prophets of the olden time render homage. In him the mighty spirits of the blessed and immortal world recognize their King. The great leader and law-

giver of Israel, after fifteen hundred years of growing knowledge in the life of heaven, comes down from the mansions of paradise to acknowledge the divine Prophet and Deliverer, whose coming he had foretold so long ago. Moses himself is seen and heard reverently talking with Jesus of the great event of his crucifixion, in which the inhabitants of earth and heaven have the most profound and awful interest.

The greatest of all the prophets, whose presence was a terror to kings, and whose prayers shut up heaven in the days of Israel's apostacy, comes back to acknowledge Jesus as a greater prophet than himself. He is heard to speak of the appointed death of Jesus at Jerusalem as the one great sacrifice for the repurchase of the lost hope of the world. This august embassy from the world of spirits, representing all the providences and revelations in the past, and all the sublime intelligence of the blessed in heaven, appears in glory on the holy mount to testify that in Christ all promises and provisions of mercy to man are fulfilled, all mourners can receive consolation, and all sinners can find forgiveness. The decease which Jesus was to accomplish at Jerusalem was already known to the inhabitants of heaven. They speak of it as an event which must of necessity take place, and one which in its consequences would become the wonder of angels, and the source of joy and praise to the universe.

That great event, so dark, so inexplicable when foretold to the disciples, has now for eighteen hundred years

become a fact in history, and it is the source of light and joy to millions. The burden of sin, crushing the penitent and weary soul, falls at the foot of the cross. The afflicted and sorrowing find consolation when looking to him who bore our grief and who was wounded for our iniquities. The darkness of the grave is scattered by light which shines from the open tomb where the Lord lay. We can glory and rejoice in every condition of life; we can triumph over death, just because the Son of God came down from heaven, took upon himself our infirmities, and voluntarily submitted to the sacrifice which his own disciples were most anxious to have him escape.

The great Master was comforted and strengthened on the holy mount by the coming of Moses and Elijah to talk with him about the things that should surely come to pass. It was a joy to his burdened and weary spirit to receive the mighty and blessed visitants from his own bright home. It made the dark shadow of death, through which he must pass in his return to his Father's house, seem like a cloud of glory. More than a thousand years had passed since the Angel of the covenant went with Moses in the wilderness to guide his steps and to strengthen his heart. And now the same divine Comforter is comforted by the coming of Moses to him when treading the path of pain and sorrow. And now he has returned to his heavenly throne with the scars of his earthly conflict in his hands and on his brow. While worshipped by adoring hosts, he still

appears to them as one that had been slain. And our earthly worship will be most like that of heaven, when most we exalt the sin-atoning Lamb. We shall be best prepared to join the society and the song of the blessed when we look with the deepest love and trust to the crucified one.

The cross stands for all that Christ did and said and suffered in taking away the sin and bearing the sorrow of the world. And so the cross becomes the central source of hope, of life, and of exaltation to man. The joy of pardon and the peace of believing come to the heart the moment the man is willing to bear the cross and follow Christ. The sacrifice of everything else is gain to him who wins Christ and is found in him. Everything given for Christ enriches the giver, everything suffered for Christ increases the stream and fills the fountain of joy.

The voice which the disciples heard on the holy mount still goes out with the message of the gospel into all the earth, making it the first duty and the highest wisdom of all to hear and obey the beloved Son. This is the voice which the first man heard in Paradise. It speaks in the inspiration of the Psalms and the prophets, it gives authority to the law which came by Moses, it lent its awful sanction to the judgments which were inflicted by the word of Elijah. It directs the wandering, the troubled, and the doubting to Christ, saying evermore in tenderness and pity, This is my beloved Son: hear ye him. It bids the thoughtless listen, and the

COME UNTO ME.

timid trust; it invites the weary and the heavy-laden to come to the Giver of rest; it says to the guilty, the wretched, and the hopeless, Behold the Lamb of God, that taketh away the sin of the world.

The voice of prophecy, the voice of the evangelist, the voice of the whole Bible, the voice of providence, the voice of conscience is ever directing to Christ, and ever inviting, encouraging, and commanding all to hear and obey him. Christ himself, in his word and life and work, is the divine wisdom which calls to men at the corners of the streets, in the high places of the ways where many meet and pass. He speaks alike to the mind that reasons, to the heart that feels, and to the conscience that responds to the claims of duty. He has a message of hope and of life for every soul. He has a right to command and yet he condescends to entreat. He has the power to crush, and yet he waits to be gracious, he longs to forgive. He walked the waves, he hushed the storm, he healed the sick, he gave sight to the blind, he raised the dead, and all to show his power to forgive and his willingness to save unto the uttermost.

This mighty and ever-living Son of God has all power in heaven and in earth. He is the Giver of life to all that live, and the source of happiness to all that enjoy. He bestows the gift of health and instruction. He sends the light of the Sabbath sun and the peace of the house of prayer. He leads the march of the seasons, and he crowns the year with goodness: and all to make us willing to hear his voice when he speaks of things unseen and eternal.

He would kindle the feeblest love into deathless flame. He would inspire the faintest heart with immortal hope. He would make the least and poorest kings unto God.

We may well hear the beloved Son, for he speaks as if he were one of us. This greatest of all teachers, this regenerator of the human mind, this Saviour of the human soul, uses the words of common life. He gives the lessons of heavenly wisdom in earthly forms. He adapts his teaching to all times and places, to all classes and conditions of men. The humble synagogue without a seat, the fishing-boat rocking on the wave, the sand on the sea-shore, the green sward of the mountain side, the solitude of the desert, the highway thronged with travellers, the princely mansion crowded with guests, the private house where the homeless wanderer rests for the night, the streets and public squares of the city, the sacred courts of the temple with men coming and going all the while, are his places of preaching and the pulpit from which he proclaims truths to shake the world.

Jesus speaks always upon the greatest themes that can ever engage the mind of man, and yet his words are equally adapted to the deepest and the feeblest understanding. An honest desire to know the way of life is all that is needed to learn of him who spake as never man spake. Be as a little child, confessing ignorance and craving to be instructed, and you will easily learn from the divine Teacher a higher wisdom than was ever taught in the most renowned schools of ancient philos-

ophy. Receive the word of Christ as a personal message to your own heart, take to yourself the lessons of his life and the merits of his death as fully as if you were the only sinner in the world needing to be saved, and you will easily learn the way, the truth and the life.

How near this every-day life of ours lies upon the borders of the unseen world! How closely we are compassed about behind and before by the armies of heaven in every day's march! Jesus and his three disciples had talked and travelled and wearied themselves on the day preceding the ascent of the holy mount, just as we work and weary ourselves in our daily occupations. The climb at evening was high and steep and cold, shadowed by clouds, bathed in sunlight, swept by storms, shrouded in darkness, just like the mountains which we have seen, just like the hills which we have climbed. When the night came on, the landscape of vineyards and fields and villages beneath them faded into darkness, the solemn stars looked down from the silent sky, and the earth and rocks beneath them were wet with dews, just as the night now comes on hills and towns and valleys and desert places all round the earth.

And yet it was to them on that lonely height, living, breathing men like ourselves, that there appeared from the spiritual world other men who had lived a thousand years before. These men, Moses and Elijah, appeared so truly in their real character just what they had been centuries before, that the disciples knew them simply from having read their history. They did not seem to

have come from far. The glory that burst forth from the person of Jesus appeared only to have shown the disciples a presence that was with them unseen before. The veil was lifted from their eyes, and they saw with what companionship they were surrounded, and in the midst of what unseen and glorious presences they were walking wherever they went in the company of Jesus. And so the peculiar manner in which Jesus is said by the evangelists to have shown himself to his disciples after his resurrection, implies that he was already with them, and it was only necessary that their eyes should be opened, and they saw him in the midst of their company.

To those who walk with Jesus now there are times when it seems as if the spiritual world were all around them. They can almost feel the touch of unseen hands extended to lead them on in safety, when perils and difficulties beset the way. Sometimes, like Jacob at Mahanaim, they feel themselves to be covered by the overshadowing of God's host, and ministered unto by the presence and sympathies of unseen comforters. The chamber of death where the disciple of Jesus dies sometimes seems to be illumined with an unearthly light, to catch the sound of heavenly harmonies, and to be kept through the long hours of weariness and pain by unseen watchers.

There may be something of fancy in all this. Nevertheless it is good for us to believe that the realties of the unseen world are very near. The departed disci-

ples of Jesus must be in active sympathy with those whose season of trial and temptation is not yet closed. In every sacrifice we make for Jesus, in every burden we bear for him, it is good for us to feel that we are serving a King whose face our beloved and blessed dead are permitted to behold in glory. With him they speak in rapt and open vision, as Moses and Elijah talked with him on the mount of the Transfiguration. And so may we cultivate in our hearts a purer and a more constant longing ourselves also to appear with him in glory on the mount of Paradise.

The loftiest visions of faith and joy are given to fit us for the struggles and temptations of our daily life. From the mount of the excellent glory, from the midst of the opened heavens and the companionship of the blessed, Jesus went down to a world of tears and sufferings. He must renew his struggle with the unbelief and perversity of men. He must take up again the burden of their sin and sorrow, and bear it with him to the cross and the grave.

These two extremes of glory and of grief, the heavenly transfiguration and the earthly toil and sorrow, are combined in one composition by Raphael in his last and greatest work—some would say the greatest painting of all masters and of all times, on which the world has gazed with wonder and admiration for three hundred years. Jesus himself is seen on the mount, radiant with light, reposing in serene and gentle majesty upon the viewless air, as he once walked upon the wave. There

has been but one human hand that could represent to the eye such benignity and grace, such glory and majesty as shine in that wondous face. Moses and Elijah are rapt in ecstacies of love and adoration as they gaze upon the living and embodied radiance of love divine. Beneath, the three disciples, shielding their eyes with their hands from the blinding splendor poured from the person of their Master, have fallen upon the ground, unable to look on his face, and yet less able to cease from gazing.

At the foot of the mount is seen the lunatic child, with distracted and death-like countenance, gnashing his teeth and convulsed with agony. The father is imploring help from the disciples. The mother seconds the appeal with the pangs of a broken heart in every look. The scribes are counselling, the physicians close the books which they have consulted in vain for a cure, and the disciples themselves are perplexed and in despair.

And all this distraction and helplessness, this suffering and sorrow among men at the very foot of the mountain on which the Son of God is revealed in glory to take on himself the burdens and griefs of the world. The great master of pictorial representation violates some of the minor rules of his art for the sake of securing a higher moral effect. He presents the divine glory of the Redeemer and the sad lot of humanity in one view, that the silent lesson of the two-fold scene may encourage the wretched and the sinning to look up for help, and that it may also teach all who share in the vision of faith and joy to come down from the lofty heights of

devotion and communion with Christ to instruct the ignorant, to help the needy and to save the lost.

It is well at times to put the wickedness and misery of the world at the furthest possible remove from our thoughts, and give ourselves wholly to the peace and blessedness with which the presence of Christ fills the heart. It is good to retire from the noise and hurry of busy life and gaze with wonder and adoration upon the glory of the Master and feast the soul with the raptures of assured faith and perfect love.

But the vision of the King in his beauty and the foretaste of heaven will not come at our bidding. It is in the common walks of duty that we are most sure of meeting Jesus in the way. The lowliest home may receive angel guests, and the most weary pilgrim may drink of the fountain of life. There are trials and conflicts and self-denials for us all to meet. There must needs be tears for young eyes to weep and sorrows for strong hearts to bear. There must be struggles and watchings for self-mastery, longings and strivings for spiritual growth, offerings and consecrations, submissions and sacrifices that seem like taking the life-blood from the heart. There must be persevering effort to do good, and patient waiting for success and earnest supplication for others that will not give them up for lost.

When by such steps we have climbed the holy mount and have seen the face of Jesus in his glory, we must go again into all the haunts and homes of men to testify of

the vision, that others may be drawn to see its light and share its joy. The purest and loftiest devotion is that which breathes forth in the most earnest desire and effort to bring others to Jesus, that their eyes may see his glory and their hearts may rejoice in his salvation. The glory of the transfiguration is a passing gleam of light from heaven, cast upon the pathways of earth, to draw our hearts to that land where there is no night, and to that home where there are no tears.

Words by the Wayside.

He talked with us by the way.—LUKE XXIV. 32.

XII.

WORDS BY THE WAYSIDE.

WORDS spoken by the wayside are not always like the sower's seed, which birds find and devour. Some of our Lord's deepest sayings, words that are still alive and will outlive all time, were spoken with but one to hear. Some of his mightiest works were wrought in the presence of only three witnesses, and they were solemnly charged to tell no man what they had seen until Jesus had finished his course. He never spoke or wrought as if he must watch his opportunity and wait for the best time. His word alone was the creator of circumstances, and his deed made all days good. It was not always in the synagogue or on the public street or in the presence of a great multitude that he made himself most fully known as the Son of God. If we speak of him as we do of other teachers, we would say that some of his grandest opportunities came by accident, like the meeting of the woman at the well. Some of his mightiest works were called out by events as sudden and unexpected as the storm on the sea.

Jesus said, "I am the light of the world." And yet as seen of men he did not always shine with equal brightness, nor was it always equally easy for men to walk in his light. He was hidden from the world for thirty years, and nobody saw anything but the son of a car-

penter in the Son of God. And when his days of manifestation came, there were mornings of heavenly beauty, and noontides of splendor, and nights of serenity and peace with the clear shining stars. And then again came days of storm and cloud, and nights of deep gloom, when the hearts of those who knew him best were distracted with doubt or oppressed with despair. Nevertheless, his years of retirement and obscurity were a part of his divine mission as truly as the years of public teaching and mighty works. The words which he spoke by the wayside were as truly words of life, as those which he addressed to the doctors in the temple or the multitude on the mountain side.

Let us follow in the steps of the Master as he goes about doing good, and catch the impress of his character from what he says when few are present to hear. Let us see how he carries himself when there is the least appearance of plan and order in his mighty works. As the private character of public men is best seen in the secret chamber and the quiet home, so, peradventure, we may come nearest to the Saviour's heart when he is speaking only to meet the demands of the moment, or doing only what comes in his way as a wanderer without a home.

In the second year of his ministry, while Jesus was still making his home at Capernaum, he was sorely beset by scribes and Pharisees, who came all the way from Jerusalem to wrest his words and hinder his work. By chance they saw some of his disciples take their frugal

meal of bread and olives without first dipping their fingers in water as a sign that every possible stain of defilement from the street or market had been washed away. And these sanctimonious ritualists, to whom a mote of deviation from form and tradition was bigger than a mountain of justice and mercy, found fault with the freedom of the disciples, and affected to be struck with horror because the Master overlooked such looseness in his followers. Jesus had cleansed the leper of the most foul and loathsome disease that ever befell men in Palestine. But the scribes said nothing in praise of the good works which Jesus had done. They only wondered and murmured because he did not dip his fingers in water before taking a bit of bread for his noon-day meal.

And that carping spirit of the scribes called out the great word from the lips of Jesus that nothing can defile or dishonor a man save the evil of his own heart. Let all the people hearken to this word by the wayside, and draw near to Jesus, that its meaning may be the better seen. To the pure in heart all is pure. The inner life is more in God's sight than the filthy rags of the beggar or the gorgeous robes of the king. No ritual of public service, no rigidity of private life, can take the place of a right spirit. When the outward decency and order of living and worship become unmeaning forms, they had better give place to the rude and boisterous energy which hews down the barriers of dead custom with the battle-axe of controversy and burns up the dry husks of tradition in the furnace of fiery zeal.

A poor, wretched paralytic, mumbling in his misery, imbecile alike in both body and mind, was brought by four friends on a mat, and dropped down at the feet of Jesus. He was too hopeless and helpless even to ask to be healed. But his pitiable state made the most affecting appeal for help. The four friends who brought him had broken up the roof of the house and let their patient down into the midst of the room before Jesus, just because the crowd was so great that they could not get in at the door. They said never a word of what they wanted. But their actions spoke louder than words, and it was easy for Jesus to see their faith. And so he said to the poor, disheartened and trembling paralytic—"Son, be of good cheer, thy sins are forgiven thee." And these same evil-seeking spies from Jerusalem, who shut their eyes to good and were quick to find the evil they were looking for, turned to each other with winks and whispers of sacred horror, as if it were blasphemy for one in the form of a man to speak of forgiving sins.

Then came that withering remonstrance from the lips of Jesus—"Why think ye evil in your hearts when there is good to be seen with your eyes?" And then to confirm the forgiveness which had brought peace to the burdened soul, he spoke the life-giving word which made the body all new—"Arise, take up thy bed, and go into thine house." And the man arose and went. And the crowd that would not give way to let the helpless paralytic be brought in, made an open path for the

strong man to go out. The voice of praise and wonder at the good work done broke forth in a shout from the multitude, while the evil-seeking scribes winked and whispered that it was the work of the wicked one, and not of God.

When the soul has found forgiveness of sin the body finds new life, and the whole man is made all new. Set the heart right with God, and the heart will set itself right with everything else. Seek the supreme good in God, and then it will be easy to find good in everything. Let the word of Christ come into the house of the soul and find all its best possessions wasted, and all its best faculties paralyzed and dead, and it will bring order and strength and beauty into the desolate habitation. The man will rise up and go forth before all observers in the joy of a new life, as the paralytic went at the word of Jesus. Let the word of Christ come to the Hottentot in his kraal, to the Fijian in his nakedness, to the Greenlander in his ice-cabin, and it will make a man out of a seeming brute, and raise up an equal with the angels from a child of the dust.

It was the blessed Sabbath day in Capernaum. The summer was burning with Syrian brightness on the hills, and the air was quivering with heat in the deep basin about the lake. The market was empty, and the noise of the city was hushed. There was no song of harvesters in the fields, and no clank of laboring oars on the lake. The reapers rested from their toil, and the boats were moored by the shore. From the half-heathen

city of Tiberias, in the distance, came sounds of soldiers mustering for parade in the morning, and here and there a Roman barge shot out upon the smooth water with rowers singing to keep time with their stroke. But Capernaum kept the day of rest, and a sacred stillness seemed to come down out of heaven on all the white cities that crowned the hills about the lake.

The people came running with more than usual haste to the morning service in the great synagogue, for it was known that Jesus would be there, and the house was never large enough to hold the multitudes that came to hear him speak and to see his mighty works. And there came also the Pharisees and the partisans of Herod to lie in wait, like ravening beasts impatient to spring on the prey. They came early, to be sure of the opportunity of doing evil on the Sabbath, by finding some cause for accusing him who came only to do good, and whose divine work would make any day blessed.

In the crowd that filled the synagogue there was a man whose right hand hung dead by his side. If he chose to lift it up, it would no more obey his will than the wooden bench on which he sat. He had pushed his way forward and seated himself under the very eye of Jesus, in hope that his pitiable condition would arrest the attention of the Healer and Helper of all. Still more, with his left hand he lifted up the right to show that the best side of him was no better than a block of wood, and that the half life left him was wearied and worn out with carrying about a dead half of himself.

RESTORING THE WITHERED HAND.

All through the service of hearing the prayers and the reading of the scriptures the wretched creature waited in hope that some word from the lips of Jesus, or some touch from his hand, would restore to him the best half of his life. At length when the time came for any who chose to speak, Jesus said to the man suddenly—"Rise up, and stand forth in the midst." The man obeyed, and all eyes were fixed on him to see, and all ears were waiting eagerly to hear what command would come next. The evil watchers were all awake in hope that now they would surely catch him in his word or condemn him in his work.

It was a moment of fearful expectancy. The life-giving word was upon the lips of Jesus, waiting to come forth. The withered arm was hanging dead beside the wretched and trembling man, waiting for the gift of new life. The crowd of people were hushed and breathless, waiting for the forthcoming of a power that could come only from the infinite God. The evil-seeking spies were waiting with eager and envious anxiety to see whether the Lord of the Sabbath would do his divine work on his own consecrated day, not that they might praise him, but that they might accuse him. It was their evil watching which brought forth the wayside word of Jesus and gave us a divine rule for the safe-keeping of the Sabbath for all time—Is it lawful to do good on the Sabbath days, or to do evil? to save life or to kill? No wonder they held their peace. To ask the question was to answer it. If they had spoken they could only have

condemned themselves. Their silence was as clear a sentence against them as their words would have been.

And now that the evil-seekers are silenced, Jesus speaks the word which the timid and trembling man is waiting to hear—"Stretch forth thine hand." And the hand which for years had refused to obey its owner's will, the hand that hung swollen and livid and dead by his side, rose fresh and strong in answer to the word of Jesus and the will of the man. It was restored whole as the other. The man, astonished, overjoyed, opened and clasped his hand, drew in and thrust out his arm, made vehement and rapid strokes up and down, right and left, only to be sure that his dead arm was alive again, his lost hand was found. The people crowded close to him, every one eager to see and touch the restored limb, every one wondering, asking how the change was wrought. But the man himself could only say,—For years my hand would not obey my will; it hung a useless weight from my shoulder with only life enough left to give me pain. The best side of me was dead. Now I am whole and sound as I was when the exuberant life of young manhood beat in every pulse and thrilled in every limb.

And yet even that good work done on the Lord's own good day only provoked the Pharisees and the partisans of Herod to take counsel how they might destroy him. It was his work to save on the Sabbath days. It was theirs to destroy. No wonder that Jesus, the Saviour, the serene and holy Son of God, looked upon such con-

duct with anger mingled with grief. Good men must have been startled to see signs of indignation in that calm face that always looked on the poor with pity, and that was always saddened under the shadow of some great and mysterious sorrow. The rude crowd in the synagogue must have been struck with awe and hushed to silence when they caught the expression of that face, wont to be so gentle, but now filled with the majesty of command, and flaming with the fire of righteous indignation. The purest and gentlest nature is most awful to meet when once it is roused to wrath by the evil and provoking passions of envy, hypocrisy, and falsehood. And it was a fearful record against the evil doers of that morning in the synagogue that they had provoked the gentle and the pitying, the patient and the forgiving Son of God to anger.

It was only a week before the healing of the withered hand in the synagogue of Capernaum that Jesus went out from the close, damp sleeping-room where he had spent the night, and the narrow, stifling streets of the city, for a little walk in the open fields, to breathe the fresh air of the calm Sabbath morning a few moments before going into the crowded and unventilated house of worship for the morning service. When once there he would be obliged to stay for hours in the close, heated air, talking with the people and replying to his envious adversaries, who were always upon the watch to catch him in his words. He would need to brace himself with the breath of the hills in order to throw

off the languor and heaviness of the night, and also to gird himself with new strength for the exhausting service that always awaited him in the synagogue on the Sabbath day.

His disciples followed after when they found that he had stolen silently away, and they soon came up with him as he walked alone in the pathways of the fields. It was hard for him to get an hour to be by himself by night or by day. He would have been glad to have had the morning alone, that he might calm and strengthen his spirit for the toil and conflict of the day. But his disciples were to him like young children to a patient and loving mother. They wearied him all the day long with their slowness of heart and their want of understanding, and they wore out his life with their questions and controversies and their constant intrusion upon his private hours. But he could not find it in his heart to cast them off.

The evil-minded spies from Jerusalem and the Pharisees of Capernaum were awake and on the watch for some pretence to accuse him. When they saw him moving towards the fields they thought that possibly he might go a few steps farther than their traditions allowed for the Sabbath day, and so they might find occasion to accuse him. With that evil hope they followed on, counting their steps, impatient to make the number enough to keep within the sacred limit themselves and charge him with breaking the commandment by going beyond.

The wheat was ripe in the fields, and it came up so close to the path that the disciples in passing along slowly behind their Master and listening to his words had the heads of the grain within reach of their hands. For a mere momentary diversion, they, like children, not thinking what they were doing, plucked a few heads of wheat, rubbed out the kernels in their hands, and ate them as they moved slowly along, just as one might pluck the petal of a rose or the leaf of a fragrant shrub and eat while walking in a garden.

Now the sanctimonious sticklers for the keeping of the Sabbath had found what they wanted without waiting to measure the length of the walk. They cried out with well-affected horror that the law had been broken by the disciples. The grain had been taken in the field, prepared for food by rubbing in the hands, and eaten, and all this under the very eyes of the Master on the Sabbath, and he, by his silence, had approved such profanity.

They came up with him hastily and with a great show of horror and indignation at what they had seen. They broke in upon his quiet conversation with his disciples and charged on him the profanation of the holy day by holding him responsible for the conduct of his followers. And it was this irreverent and unseemly interruption of Jesus in his Sabbath morning's walk in the fields that called forth from him by the wayside words that still live in the world, and speak with power to millions. Standing in the midst of the ripened grain,

in the sunlight of the morning, and speaking to men who had addressed him with insult and hypocrisy, Jesus sends out through all the world and through all ages the one great thought and intent of his divine mission; I will have mercy and not sacrifice. I come not to lay heavy burdens upon men's shoulders, but to set them free. I come not to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance.

And this wayside word of the Sabbath morning in the field is confirmed and illustrated by all other words that Jesus spoke in the temple or the synagogue. He teaches always and everywhere that no rite, restriction, or sacrifice is of any account, except so far as it shall help men to do justly, to love mercy, and to walk humbly with God. The living soul is greater than the material temple. Man is not made for the house, but the house for man. The outward ordinance is best kept when it is broken to secure the end for which it is appointed. The Sabbath is made for man, and not man for the Sabbath. All days and places, all shrines and services set apart as holy are only servants and helpers of man, to bring him liberty, healthful activity, and rest. When the life of the man becomes full-grown and strong, he shall have the freedom of the universe; and all days and places, all work and rest, all powers and possessions shall be holy unto the Lord and blessed unto man.

On another occasion the walk of Jesus was on the sea in the darkness of night and in the fury of the storm.

And yet his step was as steady and firm as when he walked through the fields of corn in the calm light of the Sabbath morning. He had been alone on the mountain in prayer, and the disciples were making their way home in the boat. But the darkness came down suddenly on the sea, and the night was deep and terrible, while they were yet far from the port which they wished to gain. The storm was loud, and the waves ran wild and high. The twelve strong men strove in vain to advance in the face of the opposing wind. They had been accustomed to the sea, and their muscles had been made hard and sinewy by long use of the oars. And they never toiled harder in rowing than they did that night. But all to no purpose. The storm drove them back as fast as the twelve oars drove them on. It was past midnight, and in the thick darkness the desired shore seemed farther off than ever, and harder still to gain.

And now, when the bravest were beginning to lose hope, and the hearts of all were ready to despair, they saw one walking on the sea, and appearing as if he would pass by them in their peril. It was a familiar form, and the same step that they had followed in the fields and on the hills, but they knew him not. They thought that some messenger from the unseen world had come forth upon the waves to warn them that they would soon be with the spirits of the departed. They thought that no form of flesh and blood could move with such ease and lightness upon the raging sea, and so

they cried out with terror, as if they had been brought face to face with the awful secret of death and eternity.

And their terror was answered by a voice which they knew must be the voice of their Master. Their cry of alarm called forth from his lips the word which still comes to the troubled and terrified in the deepest night of their sorrow, in the wildest storm of their peril—"Be of good cheer: it is I; be not afraid." This memorable word of Jesus was not a part of public speech. It was not spoken in the temple or the synagogue or to the multitude. It was only spoken as a mother might speak to hush a timid child crying in the night. But when we consider from whom the word comes and what power to help goes with what he speaks, we take it as a word of hope and good cheer for all in the darkest night and the deepest peril. We are thankful that the peril and the safety of the disciples have taught us to look for one walking upon the sea, and coming to our relief when the storm is beating upon us with all its fury, and the great deep of our affliction has lifted up its voice in wailing and sorrow.

All through the ages of human history the world is one great and troubled sea, darkened with clouds, agitated with tempest, with mighty waves lifted up on high. Thrones are set up and cast down, battles are lost and won, great cities are built in the desert, and the desert again reclaims its own. Revolution succeeds revolution, glory and empire, subjection and servitude follow each other like shadows and sunshine on the sea.

No human philosophy can bring order out of the seeming confusion. No human sovereign is mighty enough to reduce the conflicting elements to peace. Some of the wisest in their worldly wisdom have said that there is no law but conflict and no lot for man but subjection to relentless and resistless force.

And yet it is our happiness to believe that on this great and stormy deep of the world's passions and conflicts, our Christ walks in the serenity of peace, and in the majesty of a power that can hush the fighting winds and subdue the raging waves. He holds all the wasteful forces of the world in his hand, and he treads all its tumults and conflicts under foot. Out of all seeming confusion he is ever bringing forth order and peace. There is no fate above his free will. There is no destiny to defeat his purpose of love. He contends now for the mastery of the world, not as in the days of his flesh, with strong crying and many tears, not with struggle and agony, as if wounded and bleeding. He sets bounds to the wrath of the mighty. He looks upon the armies that are gathered against him, and they are scattered. The darkness that sometimes covers us and makes us cry out for fear is the sign of his presence and the shadow of his throne. Amid the uproar of popular agitation and the louder thunders of battle, we can hear his voice, clear and strong, ever saying—"Be of good cheer: it is I; be not afraid." The unseen and spiritual world out of which he speaks is the hiding of the power that protects us in danger, and the source of the light

that guides our steps and cheers us on in the darkest hour.

Jesus hushed the storm and walked on the sea to say, by the silent act, that he is enthroned sovereign over all the elements in the world. The sun shines and the rain falls, the seasons come and go, and the stars move in their courses or are fixed on their thrones of light at his command. And he will bring forth new resources from the treasure-house of nature to advance his kingdom, and enrich his people just as fast as they become strong enough in faith and complete enough in consecration to be entrusted with greater power. As yet they are only children, and they would injure themselves and the cause which they would serve if the mightiest weapons of the spiritual warfare were put into their hands. But let them become full-grown men in faith, let them come to the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ himself, and then like him they will walk on the sea and hush the storm. The power to do all needed mighty works is in Christ's hand, and he will give it freely to those who will use it well.

The power of the magnet was in the world for ages and men knew it not. The use now made of it by all mariners on the sea would have seemed a miracle to the men of old who sailed only by the sun and stars. The mysterious power which takes the silent thought from the thinking mind and sends it with lightning speed across continents, and under a thousand leagues of ocean and all round the globe, was just as active and

sensitive and mighty in all material things thirty centuries ago as now. It was in the clouds and storms, it was in the earth and seas, it sent the thrill of life through all living things. And yet it was only a wonder to the wise, a terror to the timid, and a mystery to all.

So in the great storehouse of nature, and in the deeper labyrinth of the human mind there still lie hidden treasures of darkness which the Lord of nature and of mind will yet bring forth to light, and put into the hands of his people, that they may do greater works than he did when he walked on the sea and hushed the storm. When the word of Christ is fully received, it will restore man to his lost lordship over nature, and make all the elements do his bidding. In two thousand years under the teaching of Christ the world has recovered much of that lost power. But there is more to gain. And those who live with Christ and keep his word on this earth two thousand years hence will do works which, if done by men in our day, would seem to us as wonderful and mighty as the miracles of Jesus seemed to the men of his time.

So the word of Jesus spoken when his step was on the sea and his way was in the storm is ever saying to the timid and the troubled—Be of good cheer. In the wildest tempest which ever shakes the earth or terrifies the nations, our supreme Friend walks serene upon the flood, and no violence of men or convulsions of nature can go beyond the reach of his power. Our strength to rule ourselves and to overcome the tumults and pas-

sions of the world must come from the great calm, the deep and settled peace which holds our troubled hearts when once we receive Jesus as the Lord of nature, the Arbiter of nations, and the Redeemer of men.

The wayside dispute of the disciples on the question who should hold the highest honor in the coming kingdom of their Master, brought out a wayside word from Jesus which might well be written in letters of gold on all the high places of power in the world. Taking a little child in his arms, and making a living parable of the saying, he said—"Whosoever shall humble himself as this little child, the same is greatest in the kingdom of heaven."

The old, proud life of the world had grown hard and cruel and sceptical. It was losing power with the loss of faith, and with the acquisition of wealth and the means of happiness it was sinking deeper in sensuality and misery. Superstition and scepticism went hand in hand. The learned and the ignorant alike denied facts and believed fables. Egypt gloried in tombs built for unknown occupants, and in temples dedicated to unknown gods. Babylon flaunted in splendor and rioted in luxury. Greece claimed to be the home of the muses and the school of philosophy for the world. Rome rioted on the spoils of nations, and she spread the terror of her name wherever her conquering legions marched or her golden eagles flew. But in all that old, proud world there were symptoms of disease at the heart and signs of decay in every limb. Its saints had no sanctity,

JESUS AND THE LITTLE CHILD.

its heroes were without honor, and the poor were oppressed and sold into bondage.

To raise up a new and mighty manhood, equal to the demands of the great future in the world's history, Jesus must needs begin with a new and divine childhood. The child must be father of the man, and the truest and strongest man must be like the child in humility, trust and love. The first and greatest in Christ's new and immortal kingdom must grow into their high estate from small beginnings, and with silent increase, as flowers grow in the sun, and as night passes into morning. To become great and mighty, men must first become children of God, looking to their Father for everything, seeking his lead and protection everywhere, taking his word in perfect trust, and never at ease except when feeling the grasp and following the guidance of his hand.

The gracious words of Jesus were spoken and the mighty works of Jesus were done to set the new and divine child-life before the world in such beauty and power as to win the heart and inspire the mind. He restores lost faculties to the afflicted, and sets them as children to learn anew how to walk, to speak, to see and to hear, that he may thus teach the old decayed world to begin life all anew, and to begin and go on learning with childlike docility from him who gives the opportunity to start again.

Jesus was out on his mission of mercy teaching and healing among the ten hill-towns on the east of the Jor-

dan. The people mostly were worshippers of Pan, whose shrine was cut in the rock at the base of Hermon, and beside the fountain of the sacred river. Their idea of God was represented by the form of a hideous monster, with horns and hoofs, half man, half brute. Any terrible and mysterious sound in the night or among the mountains was said by them to be the voice of Pan. And from his name, any great and terrible fright, suddenly scaring men in multitudes, was called a panic.

Jesus passing from town to town among such people, meeting shepherds and ploughmen on the highway, would teach them that the voice is God's gift to man, mightier than all the powers of nature, more mysterious than the inhuman cry which they ascribed to a fabled god of the fountains and fields. He would teach them that the new life of the world is to begin with the best use of speech as a divine gift, and with learning the simplest lessons of truth which the child-man first learned from the voice of God in Paradise.

Among the multitude of the afflicted who thronged the way wherever Jesus went, was one both deaf and dumb. To him there was no voice in the tongues of men, no sound of discord or of harmony in all the forms and forces of nature. He spent his days surrounded by a silence so real, so awful that it seemed like an imprisoning wall, a material and cruel presence, shutting him in on every side. To him the vast and infinitely diversified world of sound which makes up so much of the life of men had no existence. For the

want of the one faculty of hearing, his soul, his thinking and sensitive mind could never catch the thrill of thought in the air, or feel the pulses of the many-voiced harmony which rolls through the whole creation. He could see the motion of the lip, the glance of the eye, the gesture of the hand and the response of action which speech called forth. But his imprisoned spirit yearned and longed to catch the meaning which came to others, but never to him. He walked along the highway, anxious and troubled, looking suspiciously about him at every step, trying to make one sense do the work of two, yet always afraid, like one watching against the sudden spring of a beast of prey or a deadly serpent. It was all the same to him whether thunders crashed in the heavens or birds sang in the branches by the roadside; whether words of kindness were spoken from the lips of those that loved him, or words of wrath came from the cruel and contemptuous, no sound could break in upon the hidden chamber where his soul sat imprisoned in silence as deep as the grave.

It is hard to be deaf, and worse to be dumb. And yet one woe brings the other. The man who could not hear the words of others had no power to tell the thoughts of his heart to them. If he could only speak, if he could send forth some cry of anguish, some appeal for sympathy from his prison-house, he could bear his imprisonment better. But such relief was denied him. He was like a human soul, by some strange transmigration shut up in a body that was not made for a man,

that had not the organs and sensibilities by which the soul could hold intercourse with the outer creation. He must go about the world longing for the power to express thoughts, desires, emotions that were struggling within, and yet he must walk in the eternal silence, and speak no word, hear no sound, looking upon the living world like a man in a nightmare dream, knowing that he is dreaming, wishing to wake, and yet without the power to break the spell.

To such an one, doubly afflicted and needing to begin life all anew as a little child, Jesus comes, takes him by the hand, and leads him aside from the multitude. The way of access to the spirit of the man was closed up at two main entrances, and the divine Healer must needs make the process of cure slow, and he must accompany it with signs that the deaf and dumb may be alone with Jesus, and hear his voice first, and speak words of gratitude to him in the first use of speech.

It was with a sigh for the sad lot of souls deaf to the voice of truth and dumb to the best use of speech that Jesus said,—Be opened. And immediately the dumb sings and shouts for joy, and all sounds are music to the ears that are unstopped. This man had never learned to speak as the child learns from the mother. He knew no distinction in sounds, and he had never spoken a word. And Jesus gave him speech as speech was given to the first man in Paradise. And so would Jesus teach the great lesson that the old worn-out world of the East must go back to childhood and begin life

over again by learning every word as Adam learned it from the mouth of God. Then all voices in the whole creation will blend into one grand harmony, and man himself, renewed in spirit, will lead the praise and supply the song. When the dull ear of the world hears the voice of Christ and is opened, then the whole earth shall become as the garden planted by the Lord's hand, and the voice of the Lord shall be heard again walking upon the wind of the morning. The mountains and the hills shall break forth into singing, and all the trees of the field shall clap their hands. And the renewed life of the world shall be to the Lord for a name, for an everlasting sign that shall not be cut off.

Jesus when speaking by the wayside does not pause to describe the beauty of the flowers, the grandeur of the hills, or the glow of the sunset. And yet he implants the highest ideas of beauty in the minds of rude and unlettered men about him, and he sets the growing mind of the world upon a career of the highest culture. He says, as he walks in the fields or he sits on the hill-side in the blooming spring time,—Consider the lilies, how they grow into the perfection of beauty, surpassing the robes of kings and putting to shame the studied achievements of art. And yet every curve of the leaf and every color of the flower has been chosen and designed by your Father to adorn your earthly home, and to teach you the perfection of a higher beauty in character, and the completeness of a more divine work in life. The lilies grow silently by absorbing the

sunlight which God sends, and by drinking in the rain which falls at his command, and by drawing strength from the soil in which God stored up from of old all riches for the nourishment of the life of everything that lives.

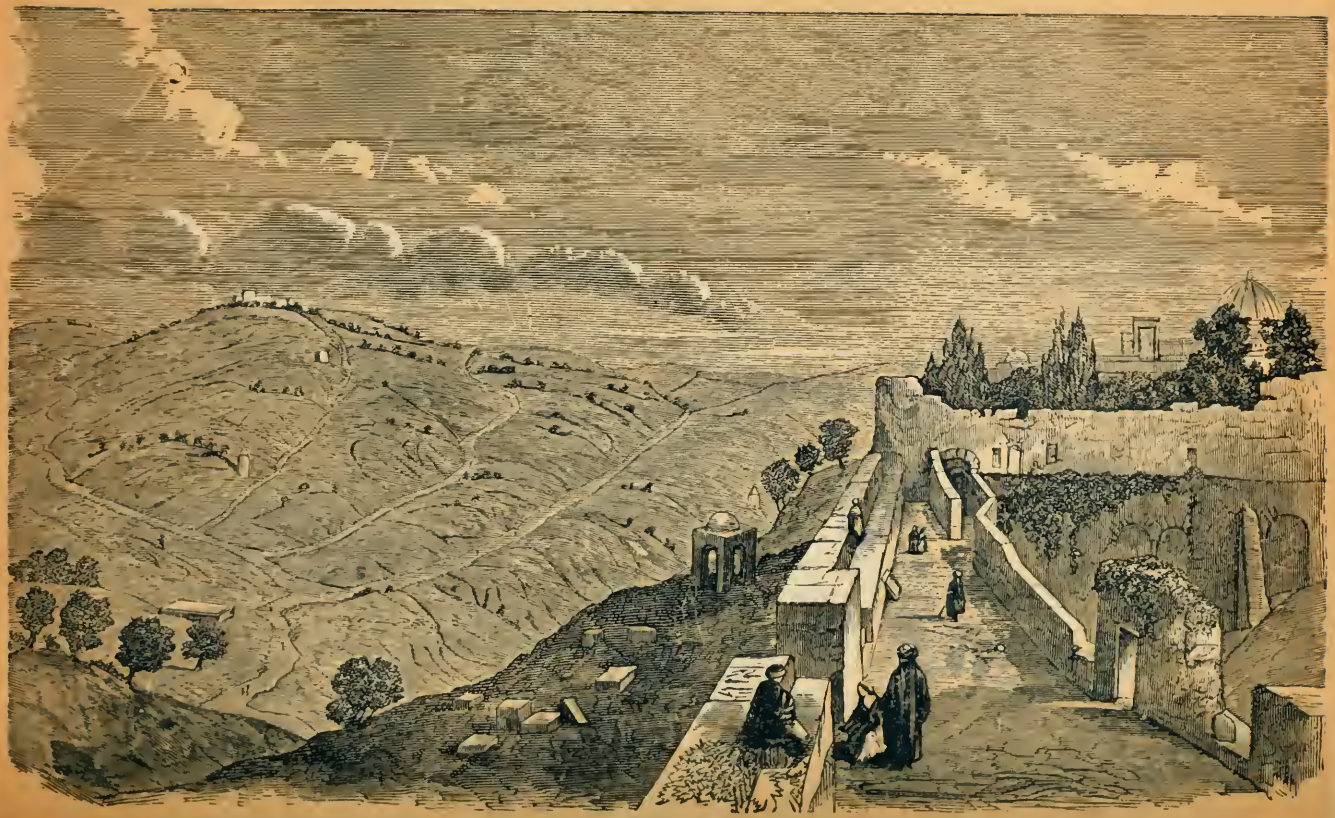
And so men, starting upon the new and divine child-life set before the world by Christ, shall grow beautiful in character without anxious and painful study; they shall be built up into manly and commanding strength without struggle and conflict. God shall clothe the least of those who trust in him with a power mightier than armies, and a beauty surpassing the array of kings. In the blessed ages of the future, when the new heavens and the new earth are made, this new life of those who follow Christ shall become as easy and natural to them as the hue to the lily and the perfume to the rose.

When Jesus walked by the sea or climbed the hills, or made his way through the narrow streets of cities, the birds of the air were circling overhead in the sunlight, or sporting on the glassy surface of the lake, or swinging in the branches by the roadside, or darting hither and thither among the people in the towns. The birds were everywhere and always in sight. So when the divine Teacher took his text from them, the book of the divine revelation in the birds was always open, and the record was plain for all to read. And so Jesus said to the anxious, care-worn, and weary,—Behold the fowls of the air. See in them the perfection of rest in God, and let their morning song be to you a sermon of

trust and love. See in them ceaseless and joyous effort, combined with freedom from anxiety and gratitude for every day as it comes. So let your life go on, attaining its high intent quietly, perfectly, as the great powers of nature, light and heat, summer and winter, and the glad children of nature, birds and bees, flowers and fruit, do their work and speak for God from age to age. These great powers of nature, the thunders and the storms, these glad children of nature, the birds and the flowers, are our good angels, God's messengers, sent to teach us the great lesson of trust and love, to bring us back into the life of order and beauty, to accustom us to the guidance of our Father's hand, and to make us satisfied with our Father's bounty.

Home in Bethany.

He went out of the city into Bethany, and he lodged there.—MATT. xxi. 17.



MOUNT OF OLIVES VIEWED FROM JERUSALEM'S WALL.

XIII.

HOME IN BETHANY.

A HALF-HOUR'S walk eastward from the wall of Jerusalem across the Kidron valley, past Gethsemane, and over the ridge of Olivet, brings one to Bethany. Three paths cross the sacred mount, one sweeping round its southern shoulder, one leading directly to the summit, one following a slight depression on the north between Olivet and Scopus. All of them were familiar to the eye of Jesus. The middle and southern track must have been trodden many times by the feet that were nailed to the cross. He put forth the same effort in climbing these steep and stony paths that we do to-day. The olive trees that grew in the valley and shaded the sides of the hill in his time are gone, but others have grown in their places, and we see the same silvery foliage rustling in the breeze of the morning that he saw; we hear the same murmur that the evening wind made in the branches above him when he bowed in the agony of Gethsemane.

We no longer see the gardens and orchards that once covered both sides of the sacred mount, and afforded camping-ground for thousands of pilgrims at the time of the great national feasts. We cannot rest at noonday under the dark, green fig trees or the thick, clustering vines that once shaded the brown earth and the bare

ledges of limestone from the heat of the sun. The Roman legions that cast a trench about Jerusalem in the last great siege destroyed the green trees and broke down the garden walls, and burnt the white summer-houses all around the city, and now crossing the Kidron and climbing over Olivet we still survey the desolations of many generations. And yet the hill, the valley, and the far-reaching landscape are the same that Jesus saw, and they are all sacred to us because they were familiar to him. We tread the same paths, we climb the same steeps, we feel the same heat in the sun of noon, and the same chill in the air of night that Jesus did. And so everything in the aspect of the country between Bethany and Jerusalem, even in its desolation, is a commentary upon the last scenes in the life of our Lord.

In all his visits to Jerusalem, Jesus entered the city in the morning, spent the day in works of instruction and mercy, and then at evening he went out to find a congenial home for the night on the Mount of Olives. He never went to Bethlehem, the place of his birth, never extended his walks about the holy city, never remained within the gates over night. His constant resort was the great, high-walled enclosure of thirty-five acres of ground, within which was the temple and walks and colonnades and open courts for the gathering of a million of people. There he appeared in the morning in the midst of the eager thousands who ran together to hear him. There he remained all day teaching the ignorant people, reasoning with the cavilling scribes, performing

his mighty works, giving himself no rest until after the time of the evening sacrifice and the going down of the sun behind the tower of David. Then he made his way through the crowd that hemmed him in on every side, passed out at the eastern gate to the Mount of Olives.

Sometimes he rested at the house of a friend among the orchards and gardens on the western slope of the mount facing the city. He could not be hid even in so retired a place. Some one would follow his steps, mark the place of his retreat, and then soon a multitude from the city and from the camps of the pilgrims outside of the gates would gather about the door and clamor for admittance. Or some one of the chief men, more thoughtful and cultivated than the rest of the rulers, and yet too shy and sensitive to be seen talking with Jesus in the presence of the crowd, would come to him by night to make more full inquiry about his mission and doctrine. Sometimes Jesus would leave the house which gave him shelter and go out and spend the late hours of the night in the open air alone, or in private and tender communion with his favorite disciples. Sometimes he would pass over the ridge of the mount to the eastern descent to find a ready welcome at the one favored home of Martha and Mary in the little village of Bethany.

Here Jesus was more completely shut out from all the world than he could be anywhere else so near Jerusalem. And yet he was right in the track of the great host that went and came during the week of the national

feasts. The pilgrims that came up on the Jericho road reached Bethany early in the afternoon, and they made the whole village and the surrounding hills echo for an hour or two with trampling feet and clamorous voices. But they all passed over and around Olivet before evening and camped on the other side of the sacred mount. When night came on, Bethany was still, and the deep calm of the village was the more welcome to Jesus because he had been surrounded all day by the crowd and clamor of the city.

The wild, stone-built town rested upon the rocky slope of a hill that rose up between Olivet and the wilderness of Judea. Standing on the tops of the houses in Bethany and looking towards Jerusalem, one cannot see either the walls of the city or the ridge of Olivet. And yet the distance is so slight that the intervening hill is often named as if it were part of the sacred mountain. The slopes of the hills around the village were faced with broad ledges of naked limestone and broken masses of boulders and gray rock, interspersed here and there with silvery olive and dark green fig trees. The palms and vineyards which were common in the olden time are now gone. A few wretched mud and stone cabins make up the houses of the modern village. A ragged wall in the upper part of the little hamlet is called the "House of Simon," and farther down is the reputed "Tomb of Lazarus," but neither spot has any real title to the sacred name which tradition gives it.

The outlook from Bethany eastward by the way of the

wilderness is over a level, stony track of half a mile, bordered here and there with empty tombs cut in the rock, and then the travelled path plunges down the dreary and dangerous gorge towards Jericho. In the distance the air at noonday hangs, glimmering and hazy, over a waste of naked hills and sunburnt ridges, with no sign of culture, and no habitation of man in sight. The vale of the Jordan lies low between the parted hills, out of view, and the rocky wall of the mountains of Moab beyond looks as if it were only an hour's walk away and a part of the wilderness which begins at Bethany.

This secluded and solitary village stood on one of the main paths of travel in Palestine for a thousand years, and yet it had no name in history till it became the nightly resting-place of Jesus. It was only two miles away from the most sacred and renowned of all the cities of ancient time; it lay alongside of the track of kings and conquerors, and yet nothing was done there worth telling of, until one of its little stone houses gave a hospitable reception to the Son of God. Now it is bound up forever in sacred association with the closing scenes in the greatest and truest life that was ever lived on this earth. Bethany henceforth shall be a name of peace and of blessing long as the gospel of Jesus lives in the world, long as redeemed men remember him who is the resurrection and the life. And it will do us good to turn from the renowned seats of ancient empire and the monuments of the mighty dead, and retire to this lonely mountain village, where every rock and path and tomb

revives the sacred memories of the last days in the life of our Lord.

The first that we know of Bethany it is named by the evangelist as the home of the family that Jesus loved. To this day it bears the name of one whom Jesus raised from the dead. Even in his time the sacred historian gave the village its most lasting and honorable distinction by naming it from the single house where Jesus was received as a guest. This lonely, rock-built hamlet, walled in on the west by the mountain, and looking eastward forever on the wilderness, shall have a blessed memorial through all coming ages, because one of its humble homes afforded shelter and hospitality to Him who had not where to lay his head. Like Bethlehem and Nazareth, this little town of Bethany, so small that it hardly retains its hold upon the hill-side, shall be visited with more interest in the enlightened future of the world's history than the ruins of great Babylon or the "chief relics of almighty Rome."

We make long journeys to see the sacred spot where some man of great genius and power spent the days of his youth. We count it a great privilege to visit the walks and groves once frequented by the sages and masters in the world's philosophy. We look with awe upon the sculptured tomb where the dust of kings and conquerors is kept with religious veneration. We walk in silence and deep thought over the ground that was once trampled by charging hosts and shaken with the thunder of battle. We set up monuments to mark the

spot where the earthly destiny of millions was determined in a day. But neither sage nor hero nor king nor battle could confer upon any spot such sacred and lasting distinction as Bethany received from the house where Jesus went to rest at night. We never should have known that any such place as Bethany had existed in the past had it not been the home of the family that Jesus loved. And yet now it can no more be forgotten than the course of the sun can be stopped in the heavens, or the gospel of Jesus can be put out of the world.

The great events of time are objects of interest to the heavenly host. They know better than we do the scenes of earth, around which cluster the most sacred and awful associations. As they pass from land to land and from nation to nation with the swiftness of light upon errands of judgment and mercy, they learn a truer geography of great events than is ever taught in earthly schools. But we can hardly think of them as saying to each other,—"In such a town was born Alexander, the conqueror of nations, whose phalanx swept the armies of the East as withered leaves are swept before the storm; on that ruin-covered hill the Cæsars kept their imperial state; beneath yonder gilded dome rest the ashes of the first Napoleon, the thunder of whose cannon echoed from the Nile to the Niemen, to the march of whose legions all Europe trembled for twenty years."

No, no, the angelic students of the earth's history look on kings and conquerors only as temporary instru-

ments of a divine will which is the moving force in all great revolutions, and which builds in its own way and casts down in its own time without asking leave of man. It is a matter of deepest interest to them to trace the human steps of that mighty King who veiled the glory of heaven beneath the garb of a Galilean peasant, and who asked entertainment for a night from creatures whom his own power had made. In their clear and far-seeing judgment of the historic past and the endless future in man's destiny, it is a fact of much meaning that a certain house, in a lonely mountain village, received the Son of God as a familiar and a welcome guest.

Christ himself has laid aside the garb of his earthly humiliation. He has gone back to his heavenly throne and resumed the glory which he had with the Father before the world was. But his spirit, enshrined and incarnate in his disciples, walks abroad through all the earth and hallows for them the humblest fare and the lowliest habitation. He shares the cave, the hovel, the dungeon with those who suffer for his sake, and their place of abode, though unwritten in the world's geography, is inscribed in letters of light upon the lasting records of heaven. The inhabitants of other worlds shall visit the homes where the disciples of Jesus lived and suffered and died on this earth when the palaces of kings and the monuments of heroes are forgotten.

There is many a miserable garret, many a damp cellar in the great city, many a lonely cabin in the open country, where God's mighty angels are daily visitants

because the Son of God has been there before them to bless some poor, suffering disciple as he went to Bethany when death had stricken the home that he loved. His presence in the humblest abode makes it more glorious in the estimate of the heavenly hosts than all the splendors of earthly state.

Sometimes the princely mansion entertains the divine Guest in its meanest apartment, simply because some poor, tired servant, late at night, climbs up the many-storied stairs, and before lying down to rest consecrates that narrow chamber with fervent prayer and grateful trust in the redeeming Love. That great house is visited by messengers from heaven just because its humblest inmate is a child of God and an heir of an immortal crown. The longest time that one lives here on this earth, the greatest wealth and power ever attained by the mightiest and the most successful in a lifetime, are as nothing in the estimate of angels compared with the high estate of those whose names are written in heaven.

The honored name which the princely mansion bears, the splendors of art with which it is adorned, the courtly company with which it is thronged, would have little attraction for visitants whose range of travel embraces millions of worlds, and whose sense of beauty and honor and truth has been enlarged and purified by thousands of years of tireless study and blessed life. And yet they would count it an honor and a joy to visit the meanest house on this earth if it be the home of one

the steep path to meet him and escort him to the door.

The house was among the best in the village, and it was thronged with guests coming and going all day and all the week. Everything was pleasant and hospitable about the house, and yet there were many signs of hurry and overwork. Jesus and his disciples appeared at the close of the short winter's day, weary, hungry, and exhausted with climbing up the long, steep ascent of the mountain path from the plain of the Jordan. The little family were delighted exceedingly to see the Master enter their door, and yet they were thrown into some additional excitement and anxiety in their eager endeavor to answer the unusual demands upon their hospitality.

Martha was the head of the family. The invitation to Jesus went in her name, and when he appeared at the door she assumed the leading part, took the place of mistress of the house, and was quite carried away with hurry and distraction of mind in providing for so many guests. She thought it to be her first duty to attend to the bodily wants of her guests, and then she might rest and delight herself with listening to the words of her divine Visitor. She was utterly surprised and indignant that any one of her family should expect the blessed Teacher to talk, hungry, weary and exhausted as he was with eight hours of hard climbing up the steep and stony road from Jericho, talking all the way.

The occasion was one to bring out the characters of

the two sisters, Martha and Mary, in striking contrast with each other. Both were equally devoted to Jesus, and equally glad at his coming. But they must needs manifest their devotion in ways correspondent with their individual temperament and habits of mind. Mary was quiet and contemplative in her disposition. She said less than her sister, but she thought and felt more. She preferred to listen and to serve silently rather than talk. And so at the coming of Jesus she forgot everything else in her desire to hear all that he would say. Leaving the domestic preparations to the care of her sister, she stole quietly into the room where the guests were gathered, seated herself upon the floor, according to the custom of the country, at the feet of Jesus, who was seated upon the raised divan, and there she listened in silent and rapt devotion to all his gracious words. It was an opportunity which one might travel half round the globe to enjoy, and Mary improved it well.

But while she was thus engaged she was missed by those of the family who were hurrying to prepare the needed entertainment for the hungry guests. Martha, anxious for the good repute of the house and excited with her many duties, suddenly burst into the room and expressed before all the company her surprise and displeasure that Jesus himself should permit or approve such desertion of the most urgent domestic duties. If she had made a silent sign to her sister from the door that her help was wanted, Mary undoubtedly would have obeyed the call in a moment. But she was too

much fretted and worried with her ambitious hospitality to exercise her wonted discretion. And her sharp words, addressed not to Mary, but to Jesus himself, seem intended to assume that the Master should not have permitted such desertion of home duties, and also that it would be of no use for her to call Mary, unless Jesus should bid her rise and go.

This impulsive and unseemly interruption drew from the lips of Jesus the memorable words, "Martha, Martha, thou art careful and troubled about many things; but one thing is needful, and Mary hath chosen that good part which shall not be taken away from her." The spirit of the Master, strong and serene, goes forth to calm the troubled spirit of the excited woman who is anxious to do her best and is not satisfied when it is done. He would teach her that there is a time for rest as well as for action, and that for those who have chosen the good part there is rest even in toil itself. He lays the most solemn and affectionate emphasis upon his rebuke of haste and anxiety by repeating the name of Martha twice in a way peculiar to himself when very much in earnest, and he leaves Mary still to enjoy the good part which she had chosen.

Now it is distinctly said in the sacred narrative that Jesus loved each member of this memorable family at Bethany. The gentle and loving John, who was present on this occasion, gives no hint that Martha was less esteemed than Mary. And Jesus did not reprove this excellent housekeeper and hospitable woman for the part

of work and entertainment which she had generously chosen. He blames her only for her bustling and talkative anxiety about things which she only made worse by fret and anxiety. He would not have her distract herself and family to hurry the preparations, or to load the table with ambitious abundance. He considered the unusual demands that were made upon her hospitality by the arrival of so many weary and hungry guests, and he would have her take time to meet the demands with a quiet and cheerful mind.

The good part which Mary had chosen was not simply the act of sitting silently at the feet of Jesus and hearing his words. The story implies that she had first taken her place with the rest of the family in preparing entertainment for the guests. She had left serving and taken her seat at the feet of Jesus only when she supposed the preparations so far made as not to require her help. She checked her intense desire to hear every word which fell from the lips of Jesus until her task was done, as she supposed, and she had earned the opportunity to rest and listen. She did not wish to waste the precious moments in worry and anxiety about work already done. Martha was restless and troubled with her endeavors to make the entertainment worthy of the house and the guest, and she was displeased that her sister should pause in the midst of such hurry and excitement and sit down quietly to hear the words of Jesus. She was eager to be praised for doing more than was needed, and she was afraid that Mary's quietness might make it

seem that there was no extra strain put upon the hospitality of the house by the coming of so many guests.

The word of Jesus does not encourage idleness nor rebuke activity. He would relieve us of all haste and worry in our work so long as we are trying our best to do it well. He would have us take time and not get fretted and lose faith if the most needed and urgent work takes the most time, and the best cause moves slow. The faster anything is done the less likely it is to be done well. The prime mover of every good enterprise, who has the most intense desire for its speedy accomplishment, is never in a hurry. God takes ages to do work which we would do in a day if we had the power. We would say to the mountain of opposition, be thou removed and be thou cast into the depths of the sea, and it should be done in a moment. The Almighty carries away the mountain a grain at a time. His work moves so slow that some say it does not move at all. He makes so little display in creating worlds that some say there is no such thing as creation. Nevertheless, God's work is always going on, and every day of time and every age of eternity pronounce it good. We should learn the lesson of quietness and energy from Him who takes centuries to do what we wonder he does not do with a word.

God sets millions of coral workers to build a breakwater a thousand miles long on the coast of a continent, and he gives them thousands of years to do it in. But when it is done it is a barrier which the waves can

never break over and the deep sea can never undermine. God commands a mighty river to take the earth of the mountains and carry it three thousand miles away, and plant a garden in a desert. The obedient river toils at the task for uncounted ages, and then at last palms wave and harvests ripen and millions live where once there was nothing but a lifeless waste of sand.

If we would give up our ambition to do miracles, and be willing to work more as God does, coming and going, without haste, without rest, carrying a grain or a handful or a cart-load, just according to our strength and opportunity, we should find it easy to level the mountains and fill up the valleys, and make a highway in the desert. We all have the power to do great things in a lifetime if we only learn to do little things well, and not to waste in hurry and anxiety the strength which we need for work. In the old and slow lands of the East, where the Bible was written, a walking horse is the best traveller for a long journey. In the new and fast lands of the West, where the Bible gives the truest life of the world, the best man for a hard task is the one who is never behind and never in a hurry, never idle and never overworked, always ready for the call of duty, and always master of the situation to which he is called.

The two sisters of Bethany represent two phases of Christian character everywhere springing from a like diversity in taste and temperament. Both have their excellences within certain limits, and both exhibit defects when the ruling disposition is pressed to undue ex-

tremes. It should be our constant study to combine the calm and contemplative devotion of the one with the energy and activity of the other. Great energy in action must needs be accompanied with great quietness of spirit, or it will soon exhaust itself in ineffectual struggles, and leave its work half done. If we would grow in wisdom and in usefulness, we must cultivate the capacity to listen and to learn as well as to talk and to teach. There are times when speech and action are the first duty. And there are times when silence and contemplation are the most excellent virtues. The tendency of devout men at one time was to the extreme of seclusion and silence. They hid themselves in caves and mountains, and so sought to cast off the corruptions and entanglements of the world. The tendency of the present day is to give too much of a bustling and business-like aspect to religion, and to neglect the inner, spiritual cultivation, without which all outward show of zeal and activity rests upon an uncertain foundation.

Christ wants many ministers in the world, some to speak and some to keep silence. And the silence is as pleasing to him as the preaching, when it is humbly and thankfully kept for his sake. There are times of trial and provocation when it takes the greatest talent to keep still. In such cases the best witness for Jesus is the one who says nothing, just because there is nothing to be said. Sometimes it requires far greater force and decision to sit still and wait than it does to display the most fervid activity. The hardest command of the great

Captain is the one that requires us to keep still and do nothing, when our hearts are burning within us to rush into the field and fling away our lives in desperate conflict.

Let those who cannot speak well consider that there is great power in silence when it is kept for Jesus' sake. The Master himself never testified more forcibly to the world than he did when he answered his accusers never a word. Some are called to suffer pain and loss and disappointment, and it is serving the Master well to suffer patiently. Christ wants a great many such apostles in the world, not twelve nor seventy, but millions, whose best service to him is to do nothing, and do it well. Christ wants benefactors whose hearts burn within them to give to the needy, and who have nothing to give. Christ wants heralds eager to proclaim the great salvation, and yet able to speak only with halting speech and stammering tongue. Christ wants pure, meek, much-suffering lives, that go on their way quietly and never complain.

Christ wants millions of missionaries to preach the gospel of purity and peace and love by living example in their own homes. Christ calls for multitudes of martyrs to suffer the pains of rack and fire, in sickness and infirmity, and yet live on and find much to be thankful for every day. Christ would enlist laborers to work hard and long in lowly occupations with little pay and nobody but himself to praise them. Christ calls for business men to preach the gospel of righteousness and

truth by living example in the marts of trade and the fields of toil, along all the highways and in all the workshops of the world. Christ wants true-hearted women, not a few, to give up the frivolity and the fretfulness of a worldly life, and go to their daily task of humble service and home duty, silent and saintly, as the Marys went to the cross and the tomb. Christ wants multitudes of men and women to go up and down the world, everywhere teaching by daily example the gospel of gratitude and patience, and simplicity and love.

The demand of the age is for men of action. And there is great need of such to face difficulty and fight down opposition, and lead the advance in every quarter of the great world-field. And yet it were well if there were more men of thought and devotion, more men of conscience and faith. The two qualities of character should go together. The dark problems of the age will not be solved without much hard thinking and profound meditation. And the most urgent work of the age will not be done without great physical endurance, heroic courage, and unconquerable energy in action. The world needs quiet and contemplative Christians, like the gentle Melancthon and heavenly-minded Leighton, and mystic Fenelon, and spiritualizing Rutherford, to teach the lesson of repose to weary and anxious hearts, and to lend the charm of quiet and thoughtful kindness to all the relations of life. The world needs Christians of intense and impassioned nature, like Augustine and Edwards, and Brainerd and Martyn, to

fathom the depths of their own spiritual necessities, and to tell the terrible secrets of the soul in words of fire. And the world needs sons of thunder, Christians with nerves of iron and faces of adamant, like Luther and Knox and Cromwell, to shake the nations with stormy vehemence, and to beat down the strongholds of iniquity with words that strike like battle-axes.

If these several characters cannot be combined in one person, it is better that they shall exist separately and in excess, than that the world shall lose the services of either. The quiet and passive virtues are beautiful and lovely at home, but they lack energy and daring for the conquest of the world. The restless and daring activity which overturns thrones and assaults iniquity in the strongholds of its power, and thunders round the earth with its great heroisms and victories, lacks the quietude and the thoughtfulness which are requisite to the highest spiritual cultivation.

And we must take care not to bring on ourselves the rebuke of the Master by blaming others whose line of duty and of development is different from our own. The world is large enough for us all to live in, and it has work enough for us all to do, and tasks suited to the taste and capacity of each individual, without giving any one occasion to say either that he can do nothing, or that his is the only way to do anything rightly. All diversities of the one human lot, all denominations of the one Christian church, have suitable and honorable work to do. It should be the ambition of all in their

time and place to do the most and best. Wherever we may see others led by sincere love to the Master, though it may be in a different path from our own, let us not blame what he is sure to bless. Whether they engage in public enterprise, or sit in contemplation at his feet, whether they keep themselves much before the world, or court retirement and repose, so long as each improves his own proper gift, let us concede the liberty of judgment to all, let us give offense to the conscience of none.

Every one can do something well, so well that God will set it down with his own work and say, It is very good. It is the despair of a decayed and world-weary heart which says that anything is made in vain, or that anybody has not great and good work to do. We should not dream away life with fancying what we would do if we had some other person's talent or opportunity, if we had been ten times as talented, or a thousand times as rich as we are. The world that might have been is the creation of fancy. The world as we find it is God's work, and it is neither wise nor modest in us to wish God had made it better. The old proverb says: If wishes were horses, beggars might ride. So they might. But in that case there would be more begging and less giving. It is better for beggars to go afoot. And it is well for those who ride to be ready to change places with those who walk. For the necessity may come, and the call of duty and the crown of honor in either case is to do well what God gives us to do to-day, that we

may be ready to do better what he assigns as our task to-morrow.

The work of life for us all is most apt to be that which lies nearest at hand. Take it as a gift from God and do it well, because it is for the best friend. The work of the house and of the field, of the shop and of the sanctuary, becomes equally sacred and acceptable when it is done as unto the Lord and not unto men. There is no drudgery in the hardest and humblest work when it is done for the highest and best end. It will make little difference when the day of toil is done whether one held the pen, the sceptre, or the plough; whether he was eloquent in speech or more eloquent by silence; whether he compassed sea and land on missions of charity, or only had the will to go and could not. Whoever has taken the task given him of God, and done his best to do it well, shall hear the King call his name and say, Enter into the joy of thy Lord.

The millionaire who gives his thousands in Christian charity and receives great praise, and the day-laborer who gives his dollar and nobody knows it, shall find equal acceptance with the great Master of the heavenly house, if each has done what he could. The honor, the success, the enjoyment of living are as great to him who has little and uses it well as to him who has much and uses it no better. Do what you can, and murmur not against the Master because he does not give you the means to do more. Trim your own little plot of ground

well, and keep it fresh and green with the bright flowers of hope and gladness, and be not envious of those who are called to the high places of the field. Withhold not your sympathy from those whose task is harder than your own.

The Master wants not gifts of gold or works of genius or deeds of heroism half so much as he wants hearts willing to do and bear what he commands. It is heroism with him to meet the trials of one's own lot bravely and not complain. It is talent of the highest order with him to be true and faithful in every duty. He counts it a gift precious beyond all price to give the heart and with it whatever the heart holds and clings to as a treasure. The power of one true life is immeasurable and immortal. We have only to go along some humble path of duty, singing with gladness for the goodness which God has shown to us all, and others will listen and learn the song when we do not know it, and they too will go singing on their way to heaven long after we have reached our Father's house.

The highest success of life is not to escape trial and trouble, but to meet it bravely and bear it well. The true glory of living is to follow the steps of him who sought his chiefest joy by the cross, and who reached his heavenly throne through conflict and sorrow. Michael Angelo was once seen hacking and hewing with tremendous energy at a rough block of marble. He was asked what he was doing. He said there was a beautiful angel shut up in that rude stone, and he was trying to

bring the celestial prisoner out. So if we struggle hard and long with our heavy burdens and stony griefs, we shall bring out of them the serene and beautiful angel, patience to adorn the place where we work and to breathe peace into the chamber where we rest.

From Bethabara to Bethany.

Jesus saith to his disciples, Let us go into Judea again.—JOHN xi. 7.

XIV.

FROM BETHABARA TO BETHANY.

THE place beyond Jordan, where the sad message came to Jesus concerning the sickness of his friend at Bethany, bears two names in the ancient records. The oldest have that which seems least likely to have been the true name, and so we take the later copy and still call it Bethabara. It was an out-of-the-way place, chosen by Jesus purposely as a retreat where he could teach his disciples quietly, and await the coming of his great and final hour at Jerusalem. He must needs have a little season for preparation himself, and it was still more necessary that he should keep his disciples close about him while the day was near at hand when they would see his face no more.

Two days after the sad news came from Bethany, he proposed to his disciples to go again into Judea. He would not delay too long, lest the faith of his afflicted friends at Bethany might be so severely tried as to end in unbelief and despair. He would not go too soon, lest he should deprive them of the best opportunity to behold his glory in his power over death. However perilous it might be to his own life, he would not refuse to go at the call of those who had received him at their own house, and had afforded him a quiet retreat from the contentious and cavilling world.

This going of Jesus to comfort his stricken friends at Bethany is a sign of what he is ever doing in spirit in behalf of all who send up their prayer to him in the time of trouble. To all who have welcomed him to their homes and their hearts in the days of health and prosperity, he will come with the blessing of peace and consolation when sorrow darkens around them, and death enters the household. He comes, still, as in the days of his earthly mission, in meekness and in lowliness, willing to dwell in the humblest home, able to cheer the saddest heart. He comes even to those who invite him not, and he stands long at many a door waiting for admission. He suffers the indignity of delay and rejection only that he may win his way to the heart by kindness and be received as a friend.

When the heart is lifted up with pride and prosperity, it is easy to say that this familiar talk about Jesus coming to the homes of men is all a pious fiction, unworthy of the attention of practical, matter-of-fact men. But let the soul be moved to its utmost depths, let the prayerless and the profane, the worldly and the wicked, be made to meet the one most urgent question—Who will show us any good? What will satisfy the deepest necessities of man? What friend can save us from an utter waste of life and loss of hope. And then they will find meaning in the word of Jesus—I will come unto you. When pleasure ceases to charm, and the low, earth-life of passion and appetite no longer allures, then the weary and disappointed must turn from earth to heaven, from man to God.

In my winter garden at the South many tropical trees and plants were growing, and among others the century plant. Once when the time drew near for a return to the colder North, to my great satisfaction one of the century-plants gave signs of blossoming. A green stem shot up from the midst of the long, thick, spiny leaves, and in two weeks it grew to twice the height of a man. The stalk was green and tender, and the top was set with a multitude of buds. One evening at the going down of the sun I saw that the upper part of the stem was bent almost at a right angle towards the west. "There," said one, "some mischievous boy has thrown a stone and broken that plant so that we shall not see it blossom." The next morning when the sun came up out of the sea and shone with dazzling brightness through the oaks and palms into my garden, I looked and saw that the century-plant was bent as much as the evening before, but then it was towards the east instead of the west. And as the day went on and the sun reached the meridian the plant rose too, and at noon still pointed to the sun.

And then I saw what it all meant. While the plant grew down close to the ground and showed no signs of blossoming, and thus attaining the purpose of its being, it was content to draw a low, earth-life from the sand, and it showed no sensibility to sunshine or storms. The long, ribbed, and spiny leaves, twisted and bent like the limbs of Laocoon, and bound together like a coil of dragons at the root, only encumbered the ground where

figs and oranges and pomegranates blossomed and bore fruit every year. But when the century plant ceased from that low barren life and shot up its central stalk high among all the trees of the garden, and put forth buds and gave promise of attaining the full purpose of its being, then it became sensitive to the gentle and mighty power of light. Then it looked away from earth and reverently followed the course of the sun in heaven. Then it bowed in silent worship to the king of day in the morning, and offered the same homage to his setting beams.

So when hard, self-seeking, worldly men become in earnest about the true purpose of life; when they break loose from their low earth-bound habits and begin to recognize the great destiny of immortality, they turn to God as naturally as the blooming plant turns to the sun. They feel that they must have light from above. Then they no longer count it a pious fiction, but a tried and tested fact, a supreme and glorious reality, that Jesus comes to those who ask his help, and when he comes in the darkest hour there is no more night. How much better it were to receive Jesus as a constant and familiar friend, when the heart is glad and the cup of earthly blessing runs over, and then he will not be far away nor slow to come in the hour of the greatest need!

The disciples feared that the proposed journey of Jesus into Judea might be attended with danger to him and to themselves, and they accordingly endeavored to

dissuade him from going. He silenced their remonstrances by declaring that every man has his work assigned, and that while he walks in the light of truth, no power on earth can prevent him from completing the work which God has given him. The great Master makes no mistakes. He never lays on any one a task without giving time and strength to do it well. Jesus had said that the sickness of Lazarus should not be unto death. He would go in the best time to make good his word, at whatever peril to his own life, and all the evil powers of darkness that were lying in wait for his destruction must be held in check till his work was done.

So it is with us all. We shall have time enough to do our work well, if we improve the hours as they are given, whether they be twelve or twenty. When our task is done, there will be time enough to rest. Life is never too short or too long for those who take it as a gift from God and use it well for him. There is no such thing as loss or failure; no sufficient reason for discouragement or complaint to those who live with life's great purpose ever in view and who have the help of God to get good out of everything. Those who walk with Jesus can tread the roughest path of life with firm and even step, without haste, without rest, doing the duty which the day brings and ready for the morrow when the morrow comes.

The hurry and the waste, the harassing fear of failure and the tantalizing hope of success, upon which

millions weary their hearts and wear out their lives, all come from neglecting the one essential work for which life is given, or attempting to do what had better never be done. Invincible energy is treasured up in the repose of a good conscience, unquenchable zeal lives and burns beneath the calm of a spirit that communes with Jesus.

A great Christian statesman and scholar adopted this rule for the division of each day: "Give eight hours of the twenty-four to toil, eight to devotion and recreation, eight to rest, and all to God." And he was a wonder among men for the amount of work that he did and for the promptness with which he fulfilled every engagement. It is the giving of all to God that makes every day profitable and saves the loss of a single hour. If we make it our study to keep ourselves in harmony with God's providence and in obedience to his word, we shall have time and talents and opportunity to do all our work and to do it well.

However many months and years of life men may throw away, however much they may burden themselves with cares and business, and plead worldly engagements for the neglect of duty, God will give all a time for one great and solemn work, and when the hour comes, all other engagements will have to give place to that. God will give all a time to die. God gives opportunities for repentance and faith, for prayer and for the study of his word, for doing good to others and for all Christian work, and men may use the opportunities for a thousand other things, rather than the one which God chooses.

But there is one call of God which none can defer, none can deny.

A hard-driven slave of mammon toiled all the week, and found the days too few to finish all that his greedy soul desired to do. The blessed Sabbath morning found him back at his desk, with bills and ledgers around him, too busy to keep the holy day. Half of the afternoon was gone before he could find time to rest. All Monday he laughed within at the cunning cheat by which he had stolen time from God and got the start of the world for the whole week. Tuesday morning tidings came to his breakfast-table that death had entered the house of a neighbor and friend the previous night. "Ah! indeed; but it is very different with me. I am so busy I could not find time to die." The fool's jest was still on his tongue when he rose, walked, fell upon the floor. His hour had come. He had pressing work and many things that nobody but himself could do that day. But he was not too busy to die.

"There are twelve hours in the day." There is a fixed and appointed season of duty, of toil and of blessing for all in this world. To those who improve it well there is just enough, none to want and none to throw away. While the season of work lasts and we are toiling in the field, God's favor will shine upon our path and make it all light. We have only to be faithful at our post, trying to do well all good work which comes to our hand, giving ourselves no anxiety about what may come or may not come; then, when our twelve hours

are complete, our task will be done, and we shall be ready to pass in peace through the rest and sleep of death into the endless and blessed life.

Jesus tested the faith and courage of his disciples by proposing to go again into Judea, and he quieted their fears by telling them that every man's time and work are given him of God, and no power on earth can shorten his time or stop his work so long as God has anything for him to do. Then, after a while, he said to them again—Our friend, Lazarus, sleepeth, but I go that I may awake him out of sleep. To him death was only a sleep, the resting of a weary traveller on the way to the heavenly Jerusalem. He looked over into the life beyond this, as the traveller sitting on the western slope of Olivet looks towards Jerusalem without seeing the deep depression of the valley of the Kidron, although he knows that it lies between him and the walls of the city. To all who receive the spirit of Jesus the grave is still a reality, but they look to the bright city beyond as if they did not see the deep valley which they must cross.

But the world, with all its wisdom and with the experience of thousands of years, has never yet learned so to think or to speak of the grave. The most imaginative fiction and the most staid and sober history agree in representing death as the most awful thunderbolt of the divine wrath that has ever fallen upon this earth. In all the languages of men it has been named the king of terrors. To the mere man of the world, who is living

JERUSALEM IN THE TIME OF JESUS.

only for this present time, death cuts off every hope, destroys every possession, blasts every joy. To him beauty of form and pride of place and glory of intellect are but dust and ashes when death comes to change his face and send him away. Let philosophy arm itself with studied and proud resolution; let worldliness march blindly on, refusing to think of anything beyond this life; let romance strew the grave with flowers, and art make the habitations of the dead more beautiful than the homes of the living, still to those who have nothing better than philosophy or wealth, or art or romance to rely upon, death, in any form, under any circumstances, is awful.

In no way does Jesus assume a more complete superiority over everything that we have to fear than by taking away the terror of death. He speaks of it only as a sleep, a peaceful and holy rest, the awakening from which shall be the beginning of a new and blessed life. And in all Christian time the disciples have learned from their Master to speak of their departed brethren as sleeping in peace, sleeping in hope, sleeping in Jesus.

And all the toil of life is appointed as the best preparation for the rest which remains for the people of God. The sleep of the laboring man is sweet, and labor is sweet, too, to him who works for God. No medicine of the physician, no exemption from care, no luxuries of house or service or table can command such refreshing sleep as honest, manful labor brings to the weary every night. And so the sleep of death will be

sweet and welcome to all whose work of life is well done.

Let every one count it an honor that God gives him something to do, and the harder the work the greater the honor to be entrusted with it. Life is the time for toil. It is the fool who says to his soul—Take thine ease. Ease comes most surely to those who seek it least. And besides the rest for which the soul craves, and without which it can never be satisfied, is the rest of high and harmonious activity in the free and right use of all its powers. The call for more laborers in every part of God's great vineyard grows louder and louder as new fields of usefulness are opened, and new facilities for doing good are multiplied. In such a time none but a recreant and an idler would make it his study to shun responsibility and seek repose while immortal harvests are white and waiting in the field.

There is no promise that assured rest will be given here, and those who fix their hearts upon a time to fold hands and sit still and take no responsibility, are sure to be disappointed. The long-sought season of rest never comes, or, if it comes, it never satisfies. Many work hard and wear out all their strength to lay up for themselves a few years of rest on earth, and yet never find an hour of calm, abundant peace. Many toil and weary themselves like galley-slaves in the hard service of mammon, and then, when all is done and they have been more successful than they dared to hope, they are compelled to make the bitter confession that they have

spent their strength for naught. The work and the weariness of life have been theirs in full measure, and yet they have never been encouraged and comforted by the assurance that when the toil of life was done they should enter into blessed and everlasting rest.

Many bind themselves in heavy bonds to the god of this world; they consent to be made slaves and they bow down beneath heavy burdens; they give their hearts to be pierced and tortured with care and anxiety; they deny themselves the true joy of living, and they get nothing for their pains but regret and disappointment. The more the miser loves his money the more miserable it makes him. The more completely the worldling gives himself to the world, the less satisfaction he gets from his choice. The further off the procrastinator puts the discharge of to-day's duty, the less happy he finds himself in forgetting God. When the Master comes to reckon with his servants, it is a sad day for those who have nothing to show but misimproved talents and wasted hours. The sleep of death is sweet only to those who have toiled their appointed day in the Master's field, and who lie down in expectation of the morning and the everlasting day.

To every faithful laborer who has toiled and suffered to the end and who has gone singing to his work, even when he found few to help and the heat of the day hard to bear, Jesus himself will come in good time to awake him out of sleep where he has laid down to rest, and to clothe him with the robes of immortality. He shall hear

the voice which the dead Lazarus heard in Bethany, and he shall come forth to a new life whose serene and tireless activity shall be the truest rest for the soul.

When Jesus told his disciples plainly that Lazarus was dead, he said—"I am glad for your sakes that I was not there, to the intent that ye may believe." He ventured to be thought unkind and forgetful of his friend for a time, that he might show the greater kindness in the end. If he had been at Bethany, and had seen the progress of the disease under which Lazarus was hastening to the grave, compassion for the suffering one and for his alarmed and afflicted sisters would have constrained him to put forth his miraculous power and arrest the mortal sickness before its work was done; so he would have deprived himself of the opportunity to perform the greater miracle of raising the dead. He confesses himself unable to witness the sorrow of his friends in the house of sickness and death without putting forth his divine power for their relief, and that, too, when he had the strongest reasons for withholding his hand for a while that he might do the greater work in the end.

This inability of infinite love to cease from loving and helping the dependent and the suffering is one of the great wonders of divine revelation. It is the infirmity of infinite power; it is the weakness of infinite love that it cannot refrain from pitying the fallen and helping the needy. The same Jehovah-Jesus, the Angel of the Covenant, said to Lot—"I cannot do anything till thou be

come" to a place of safety. Jacob discovered the unconquerable Angel in the mysterious antagonist against whom he had wrestled in the dark till the morning, and then he was not rebuked for saying—"I will not let thee go except thou bless me." The lonely and defenceless man who feared that he should be destroyed by his angry brother Esau had power with the infinite One by his very weakness, and prevailed.

The feebleness of the babe overcomes the strong man's heart. So the Almighty Father cries in compassion over his erring and helpless child, "How shall I give thee up? Mine heart is turned within me, my repentings are kindled together." Ages before the Son of God appeared in fashion as a man, and by his meek and gentle spirit showed the true character of the Father to man, it was written—"Like as a father pitieth his children, so the Lord pitieth them that fear him. For he knoweth our frame, he remembereth that we are dust."

This is the great lesson which we all have to learn through living faith in Christ, the Son of God. Reason and nature can teach us much concerning one supreme, eternal, almighty Creator. Science can teach us much concerning one mysterious, exhaustless, everlasting energy which upholds all worlds, balances all systems, rules all destinies. The gospel of Jesus alone, with its human tenderness and touching simplicity, can make us acquainted with one all-pitying, all-loving Father, so deeply touched by our affliction that he cannot restrain

himself from helping us in our need. Inspiration alone may venture to say that human weakness can prevail over infinite power.

Multitudes pass through the world restless, impatient, unhappy all the way, always grasping at something beyond their reach, always dissatisfied with that which has cost them the most pains, always feeling that something for which they are not responsible stands in the way of their happiness. It would make life and the world all new to such if they could only believe that they have a Father in heaven rich enough to bestow every blessing upon his children, and always too kind to let them suffer except for their good. It would be the most glorious revelation to all the unhappy if they could see and believe that God cannot withhold himself from helping those who trust him as children should trust such a great and kind Father.

And these words are not simply for those who are already in trouble. It often does very little good to speak of God's pity to the afflicted, just because they have not learned to recognize his kindness in the day of prosperity. They forgot that all blessings came from their heavenly Father when their cup was running over, and they find it harder to see when the cloud is upon them, that affliction itself may be sent by him in still greater mercy. If we walk with God in the day of peace and prosperity, we shall find it easy to believe that he is still with us in the night of conflict and sorrow.

When death entered the house of a Hebrew family it was the signal for violent outcries and loud lamentations. The afflicted rent their garments, disfigured their faces, plucked out their hair, covered themselves with sackcloth and ashes, and sat upon the ground. For many days all the ordinary pursuits of life were given up, their only food was bread of affliction mingled with their own tears, and to all outward appearance they surrendered themselves to utter wretchedness and despair. In many cases hired mourners were employed to lift up their voices in weeping and wailing, and sympathizing friends were ambitious to outdo each other in noisy demonstrations of woe. Thus in every way the misery of those who mourned from real sorrow of heart was increased by the mistaken or affected zeal of those who came to comfort them. The custom often degenerated into a tiresome and unmeaning form, and the afflicted were wearied and oppressed night and day by the ambitious and noisy condolence of their friends and neighbors.

Such was the scene of mourning in the stricken house at Bethany when the divine Comforter came, the fourth day after Lazarus had been carried to the grave. Many a time had anxious messengers gone a long way down the stony path towards the east, and sat upon some high rock watching the companies of travellers climbing up the steep ascent of the mountain road from Jericho, hoping that Jesus might be among them. Often had the wearied and disappointed outlooker gone back to

the village to say there was no sign of his coming. Many a time had the bereaved sisters gone up to the house-top and looked down the stony wilderness of Judea, and across to the blue mountains beyond the Jordan, and every sigh of their stricken hearts said,—"Oh, that Jesus would come!" Again and again had they questioned the messenger who came back from Jesus with the promise of recovery if by any means they could find a ray of hope in that strange and tantalizing word—"This sickness is not unto death."

At last the message is sent back by the foremost of the outlookers in the way of the east, and it is passed on from voice to voice faster than swift runners can carry it—Jesus is seen on the road, he comes to explain and confirm his own word. Weary with the journey and stricken with the sorrows of the afflicted, which he bears upon his heart, he climbs the steep road and he shows himself on the stony ridge, in sight of the town, and he pauses there to rest, half a mile away. He sits as he sat by the well-side at Samaria when the woman came to draw and he gave living water to the thirsty soul. The blessed Comforter, who brings peace to the living and life to the dead, will not go at once to the house where excited friends and guests are gathered all in one close and crowded room, and everything is filled with the outcry and ceremony of woe. If he is to do anything for those who are truly afflicted, he must first see them apart from their vain and noisy comforters.

So there he sits on the stony ridge which looks east-

ward towards Jordan and the Sea of Death, and westward towards Bethany and Olivet, in all outward aspect like one of the sons of men, yet with power to raise the dead. On the one side of him is the sign of desolation in the wilderness and the sea, and on the other the sign of life in the crowded city and the cultivated homes of men. He sits as the mediator between the two, having equal power over both, holding the keys that unlock both the grave and the gateway of life. He waits to speak the word of hope in the best time and in the place where other voices will not drown his own.

Some go forward into the town to tell the afflicted sisters where Jesus may be found. One after the other they hurry to the spot, and they give utterance to the first gush of anguish at the feet of the Master in the same words, "Lord, if thou hadst been here, my brother had not died." It is the old cry which human grief has been uttering for ages when a great calamity comes. If something had been done that was not done, then this precious life would have been saved, this great loss would not have been suffered, this dreadful cloud would not have darkened all our hopes. If we had known it soon enough, then we could have checked the course of the disease that has ended in death. If we had known that there was poison in the air, we would not have slept where fever fell with the falling dews. If we had taken advice which seemed an idle dream at the time, then peradventure we should have been saved this great sorrow.

But to those who live in love with God's work, and who try to do it well, there is no such thing as misfortune. Everything sent from God and taken trustingly as from his hand is a blessing. The things that might have been and are not are only dreams. The plain reality which God sends is much greater and better. And when Jesus comes to comfort us in our sorrow, he does not bring back the past, or undo what has been done, but he teaches us how to bring light out of our darkest day, and to build steps up to heaven out of our dead hopes and our stony griefs. So in the quiet spot beyond the village, before a crowd had gathered, or it was generally known where he was, Jesus taught the heart-broken sisters not to weary themselves with vain regrets for the past, but to trust in him and be at peace.

So on another occasion when Jesus came by urgent request to a house which had just been visited by death, and he found the friends of the family filling the rooms, and the people making a noise with outcries and lamentations, he would not do anything until the excited company were put forth, and the afflicted ones, who needed his consolation, were able to give quiet and thoughtful attention to his words.

If it ever becomes us to be still and know that the Lord he is God, and to give patient and thoughtful attention to the voice of his holy providence, it is when he comes near us by the awful visitation of death. It is a very sacred and solemn season to the whole family when one of their number lies dead in the house. God is

there speaking to them from the marble face and the silent lips which were so lately full of life. It should be their chief concern to understand and improve the lesson which the great preacher, Death, is sent to teach.

God has a gracious meaning and purpose in his most afflictive dispensations for the instruction of his children, and they should never let the world come in with its forms and fashions to divert their attention from their Father's voice. The world is proud and pretentious even in its grief. It fasts and weeps to be seen of men. It is very careful about the fitting and the finish of the dark garments of mourning. It prescribes the length and order and degree of grief for the departed. It guards the door of the house and says who shall go out and who shall come in. It selects the veil for the living and the shroud for the dead. It would set up its exacting claims, and enforce its factitious laws, and dictate the dress and expression of sorrow in the midst of the family when a voice speaks to them from the bed of death and the open grave and the supreme realities of the unseen and eternal world.

Let those who believe in Jesus behave themselves under affliction as if he himself had come to the house, and had sat down quietly by their side to comfort them, and to teach them the great lessons of submission and faith. We need not be afraid to pour out all our sorrows before him, for he himself is touched with the feeling of our infirmities. In the days of his flesh, he

expressed the anguish of his own heart with strong crying and many tears. When he saw others weeping around him at Bethany, he himself wept and groaned in spirit and was troubled. To such a Friend we may surely tell all our grief. But if we would receive such consolation as he alone can give, we must not let the world come in and weary our hearts with its studied form, and parade and drapery of woe. If the world must enforce its capricious laws anywhere, let us be exempt from its tyranny at least in the house of mourning and in the presence of the dead.

"Lord, if thou hadst been here, my brother had not died." The heart-stricken mourners of Bethany had faith enough in Jesus to believe that his presence with them at an earlier day could have saved them from their great affliction. They did not dare to believe in his power to make his absence from them in the time of their greatest need the occasion of their deepest and most unutterable joy.

Their grief was the keener just because they were almost within reach of one who could help them, and yet he came not. The mighty one who could heal all manner of disease was their special friend. He was only a day's journey off when they wanted him most. And yet he was not there. He had been with them often in the time of joy. When trouble came and they sent for him by a trusty messenger, he received the word, but did not come. It seemed as if they had been almost safe in the time of peril, and yet their dearest hope was lost.

What a world of sorrow, what a sting of regret, what a deep cloud of despair is often called to mind by that one word—*Almost.* A great aim almost gained, then lost—a precious treasure within reach of the hand, then gliding from the grasp—a great joy possessed already in anticipation, never in reality. An Alpine hunter was climbing on the face of the cliff. It was steep and jagged and high. He had almost reached the summit when his strength failed. He fainted and fell, and was dashed to death at the foot of the crags. And the wail of the widow and the cries of the orphan children were the more bitter and inconsolable in that mountain home because the hunter had almost finished the ascent when he fell.

A little boy was out on the ice with his sister at play. The treacherous covering of the frozen river broke beneath them and both fell in. The brave boy exhausted his strength in crying for help and in keeping his sister from sinking. When he could hold out no longer, he spoke a word of encouragement and of hope to her, said good-bye, and sank in the cold deep to drown. In a few moments help came, and the sister was saved. And the grief was the greater in the stricken home of the parents that night because the brave boy, who died to save his sister, almost saved himself also, and yet was lost. Oh, if he could have held out a few moments more! The help for which he called was coming and was almost there. It was sad to think that the noble boy must die when his own cry and courage had almost brought help for both.

The ship had been out on the deep, battling with the winds and storms for many a day and night. The officers had held their post, the sailors had climbed the mast, the watchman had walked his weary beat, the steersman had kept his eye on the compass and his hand on the helm. And now they were in sight of the desired port. The towers and roofs and chimney-tops of the city were shining in the morning sun. The hearts of all on board were beating with gladness over the successful completion of their voyage. Suddenly there was a crash that shook the hull from stem to stern. There was a sound of rushing waters beneath the deck. The ship gave a lurch, and went to the bottom with all on board. And the sorrow for the loss of the ship was the greater because it had almost reached the safe harbor.

The flagman heard the sound of the coming train. He was off his post, and he knew the switch was wrong. He ran with all his might to repair his neglect. His hand only just reached the bar without time to slip the track, when the train rushed by. The bank was strewn with splintered cars, and the ditch was filled with the dying and the dead. And the unhappy man who only almost did his duty, but did it not, was made a maniac for life. The switch was only an inch out of place, but it wrecked the train. The flagman's hand was on the bar. In a second more he could have set it right. But he was too late.

Too soon! too late! Alas! how often the words fall

upon the ear like the clods upon the coffin. "Too soon," mourns the mother's bleeding heart when the pale shadow of death settles down upon the innocent brow of her first-born babe. "Too soon," answers the light-hearted youth, when Jesus comes with infinite love in every look, and says—"Give me thy heart; follow me." "Too soon," sighs the weary and disappointed worldling, when pleasure loses its charm and desire fails, and the shadows of age and disease gather around his path.

"Too late," moans the stricken parent, when told that a wiser physician or better remedies or more prompt attention would have saved the life of a beloved child. "Too late," whispers the fainting invalid, who has sought a more genial climate for recovery when disease has already poisoned the fountain of life. "Too late," sighs the dying man, who has long forgotten God and who is told upon the bed of death that the voice of mercy still pleads for him.

And so with multitudes the memory of the past is strewn all the way with bitter regret. If only something different had been done from what has been done, then they suppose the present would be all peace and the future all hope. So they fondly dream, not considering that what they most regret in the past may have been sent in mercy or may yet be improved so as to be the occasion of endless joy in the future. To those who trust in God and do their duty, the best of everything is always to come. And we are not to fear that our

divine Deliverer has lost his interest in our welfare because we cannot see his face in the dark hour of trial and temptation.

The night was black with clouds and tempest on the sea of Galilee, and a little bark that carried the teachers and reformers of the world was struggling with the waves and in danger of perishing. The disciples believed that if Jesus were with them on board, his presence might save them in the extremity of their danger. They had no thought that his eye could see them through the darkness from the distant shore, or that he could come to them walking upon the waves. They could only regret that they had put out to sea on such a night and that Jesus was left alone on the land. But when he came to them and the storm was hushed, and the ship was safe at the shore whither they desired to go, their regret was changed to gratitude and joy. Then the hard rowing against the wind and the violence of the waves and the blackness of the storm and the greatness of the danger were remembered with thanksgiving as the means of bringing forth the power and glory of their Master in clearer display than they had ever seen before.

And such would be the happy result of every trial and temptation to which we are exposed, if we could only have faith enough to toil on and hope on till the hour of deliverance comes. It is not necessary for us to see the hand that guards our way. We have only to press on in the course of duty at God's command, and if at

times it seems to us that our step must be upon the void, we shall find the rock beneath when we set our foot where the Master leaves the trace of his.

When disaster and disappointment have befallen us, and our wisest plans and best purposes are defeated, it does not become us to sit down and mourn in despair, as if all were lost. In any case we must all find much in the past to regret. And sometimes we see most to regret when we have set our standard of action highest and have done most to improve our time well. But it is by mistakes and failures that the conscientious learn and the diligent improve. Defeat in a single battle is often the condition of success in the long campaign. The apparent withholding of the divine blessing for a season prepares for a more abundant harvest.

In northern climes the reapers find two kinds of wheat in the field at the time of harvest. One grew from seed sown in the early spring. The warm sun and frequent showers and mellow earth caused it to shoot up a rapid growth and to bring forth its mature and ripened grain without any appearance of delay or failure. The other was sown when the heat of summer was already past, and the falling dews were changed to frost, and the snows of winter were close at hand. It had scarcely become rooted in the soil before the earth was firmly locked in fetters of ice, the process of growth was arrested, and for successive months the whole vegetable world was wrapped in the pall of death. But when the warm spring breathed upon the earth again, the winter

grain was prepared to shoot up the more vigorously because the severity of frost and snow had compelled it to take deeper root in the earth. And the harvest is ever most abundant and the best from the grain which has been checked in its first growth, cropped down and trampled upon by grazing flocks and buried beneath drifted snow.

So does God send the long, cold winter of trial and delay and disappointment to give us time to deepen and enlarge the foundations of our faith. Then when the heavens are opened and the gracious rain descends, the seed of the divine word, which has been sown in patience and sorrow, springs up and brings forth the most abundant harvest.

The Stricken Home.

Many of the Jews came to Martha and Mary to comfort them concerning their brother. The Jews which were with her in the house and comforted her, when they saw Mary, that she rose up hastily and went out, followed her, saying, She goeth unto the grave to weep there.—JOHN xi. 19, 31.

XV.

THE STRICKEN HOME.

IF any home on earth could be free from the anxiety, the suspense, and the silent anguish of waiting on the sick and the dying, it would seem that it should be the home where Jesus often sought refuge from the cold and contentious world, and where he ever found sympathizing friends and a warm welcome. If any family in all the land of Israel could be warranted in feeling themselves secure for a time against the stroke of affliction and the visitation of death, it should be the one towards which Jesus was drawn by ties of the deepest and most constant love.

And yet the great woe which has come upon the whole human race by transgression of the true laws of life and of happy living is too deep and dreadful to spare even the friends whom Jesus loves. He makes himself so completely one with them in their human lot that their grief is his, and while he has the gift of life to give he stands with them in common exposure to death. The one all-pitiless destroyer, that was never yet restrained from his work by the revered aspect of age, or the wail of helpless infancy, or by any degree of beauty or excellence in character, must not spare even the home where the Son of God in the last days of his ministry found his only rest. There, where the Com-

forter of all the sorrowing, the Healer of all diseases, the Giver of all life so often went to repose after the weary day spent in the narrow and noisy streets of Jerusalem, there came the pale shadow of sickness and darkened the light of the window, and sat down unbidden at the daily board, and lingered in the quiet room, and would not be persuaded to depart day or night. In the very house where Jesus had so many times sat at meat, and cheered all hearts with words and looks of love, in the very chamber where he had slept at night, and from which he had gone forth in the morning, leaving the blessing of peace behind him, there must be the silent step which waits upon the suffering, the sympathizing look which strives in vain to conceal anxiety, the suppressed voice which whispers hope while the heart is heavy with fear. The very one upon whom the family must be most dependent for the preservation of its name, and for support in the time of trial and adversity, is smitten down by relentless disease.

The alarmed and sorrowing sisters watch by night and by day the growing symptoms of a fatal result, and they exhaust every remedy in the vain effort to sustain the sinking powers of life. It now seems to avail them nothing that Jesus is their especial friend, and that he has often given them peculiar tokens of affectionate regard for their suffering and dying brother. They are in trouble and are anxiously looking for any sign of hope or relief. But they find none. Their divine Friend is far away beyond Jordan, and the chief rulers are so

excited against him that it might cost him his life if he should come to help them. The quiet home towards which Jesus had so many times bent his footsteps at evening, and where his presence had filled every heart with peace, must soon be made darker still with the shadow of mourning and the pall of death.

And such is still the lot of the families which Jesus loves in all the earth. There are many such, and he has long been with them in spirit a frequent and a familiar guest. At evening-tide, in the night watches and when the morning brings the gladness of the new day, they welcome Jesus to their homes and to their hearts. They set before him the best of all they have, and they only wish they could give him more and better, and that he would make his abode with them always. In him they see the brightness of the eternal Father's glory brought so near and clothed with so much of human kindness, that they reverently call him Brother, and trust in him as the support and guardian of the household.

And yet affliction will not be forbidden to smite such homes. Death will not be commanded to spare the parent, the brother, the sister, or the child whom Jesus loves. The very Friend in whom they most confide, who is himself most interested in their welfare, and who can do all things for them in the hour of need, will not command the destroyer in his goings forth through this sorrow-stricken world to pass by their dwelling without entering. Infinitely gracious and compassionate

as Jesus is, he does not promise to turn aside the stroke of affliction even from those who walk most closely with him in all the journey of life. He is willing to visit the most wretched home, and to watch with the suffering in the darkest hour. But his presence will not dismiss pain. Even to his dearest friends he still says, "In this world ye shall have tribulation." When they ask for a home where there shall be no more sorrow he points to the dark gateway of death.

And besides, the great sympathizing High Priest of our profession has taught us by his own example how great and godlike it is to suffer, and to be made perfect by suffering. The serene and blessed heights of peace and joy are attained by those who have climbed the rugged steeps of pain and toil. God sends the sorest chastisement upon his most beloved children, that they may be made white in the furnace of affliction, and be presented without spot before his throne. The troubles and disquietudes of this earthly life will prove ministers of mercy, if they make us cling to our Father's hand and long for rest in our Father's house. The single eye of faith can see the bow of promise upon the darkest cloud. The quick ear of obedience and affection can hear the voice of love amid the thunders of the wildest storm.

The best lessons of life are often learned in its darkest hours and from teachers that never spare the rod. The ministering angel that brings the blessing of peace often looks upon us from the sad eyes of patience and of pain. I was once in the way of visiting the house of an aged

man who has now gone home to be with the angels, and who has been made equal with them. He was a man of giant frame, strong convictions, intense and fervid feeling on any subject that touched his heart. What he believed at all he believed with all his might. If he had lived in the days of persecution and martyrdom, he would have died at the stake, and he would have sung and shouted for joy and triumph in the midst of the flames. He combined the courage of the hero with the faith of the martyr. No form of opposition or danger could deter him from doing what he believed to be his duty. When his strong spirit was stirred to its utmost depths and his giant frame and mighty voice trembled with emotion, it seemed like the breaking up of a great deep.

And yet that brave, strong, true man was very sensitive to slight irritations. He was very apt to fall into moody and despondent frames of mind. With great faith and great devotion to the good of others, and a wonderful capacity to comfort the afflicted and cheer the disheartened, he was seldom cheerful or happy himself. He was like the great masters of thought and feeling who learn in sorrow what they teach in song. He could hold up the light for others to see, while himself walking in deep shade.

He had indeed many things to try and to trouble him, as all true and sensitive souls will have. But he never learned to take to himself the wise and kindly counsels which he gave to others until God sent an angel to sit

with him in his own house and look at him silently from the sad eyes of patience and of pain. And that angel-teacher came to the strong man with an aspect so clear and open and human, that he thought the heavenly visitant was only one of the children of earth, an heir like himself to the inheritance of sorrow and pain.

It took place on this wise: The wife of the man, the partner of his life-long toils and afflictions, who had always cheered him with her hopeful spirit in the days of darkness and despondency, was herself smitten with a lingering and agonizing disease that could end only in death. As the slow years of pain and wasting sickness went on, five times she submitted to keener torture with a hope of relief, but all in vain. She became so worn at last as to seem like a shadow, hovering upon the horizon of the unseen world, liable at any moment to pass away.

And yet through all the lingering trial of years, the room of that suffering woman was the holy place in that house, the one chamber most like heaven. And it was like heaven not simply because it was solemn and all within felt themselves to be in the awful presence of affliction and death. But it was like heaven because it was always full of light and peace. It was the one room in the house to which all whose hearts were burdened and troubled would go for light and gladness.

And the man of great intellect and mighty power, whose words had stirred the hearts of thousands in the great assembly and in private conference, first learned to suffer and be strong from the calm, bright angel

Patience appearing to him in his own house in the person of his suffering, dying wife.

He had a voice great and terrible, and it made wicked men think of the judgment to come when it was lifted up in loud denunciation of public and private wrong and in pleading the rights of the poor and neglected. But he would call his wife, old as they both were, by her child's name, with all the gentleness and tenderness of the first whisperings of youthful love. The sweetness of tone and hopefulness of spirit which he failed to learn from her in her days of health he caught at last so fully that his own life was made all new.

Never did the house of that old man seem to me so peaceful, so cheery, so bright, so nearly just what any human home should be as when I saw it last, and the coming of the angel of death was expected from day to day. The old man had lost little of the force or the fire, the courage or the command of other years. But he had become so gentle, so kindly, so hopeful, so childlike in manner and disposition, that he seemed a new man. And he had learned much of that better spirit from the bright angel Patience, sent to his own home in the person of his suffering, dying wife. And she had to bear afflictions many and sore and long to acquire power to teach that lesson.

It were well for us all if we could learn to see God's gentle and strong angel of help in every affliction which comes upon the home, in every disappointment which casts its shadow upon our path. Light will come out

of the cloud if we wait and look for the day, just as a new and more glorious morning broke upon the house in Bethany when it seemed that the sun had gone down in utter and endless night. Everything best worth having even in this world may be made ours by patience. Everything that can make life richer, purer, better; everything that can give us most to be thankful for in the past and most to hope for in the future, can be made ours by patience. The great and glaring virtues which startle the world and secure the admiration of millions, are not so strong or sure of victory as the gentle angel Patience that walks in the fiery furnace of affliction and defies the power of the flame. It is a sorer test of courage in the soldier to stand and receive the fire of the foe without returning it, than it is to rush upon death in the desperate charge. Whoever has strength and courage to wait finds it easy to advance and win.

Patience is the panoply of God through which the stings and arrows of irritation can never pierce. Put it on and wear it well, and you can sing when others sigh, and you can rejoice when others mourn. Patience is God's good angel, not ever bowed down and weeping, but coming on wings of light to help us up the hill, when the burden is heavy and the way is steep. Patience is one of the strong sons of God sent down to our earthly home to teach us the songs that are sung in our Father's house in heaven.

We cannot know when or under what circumstances the journey of our life will close, but it need not be in

darkness or despair. Some will be called without a moment's warning; some will be let down to the grave slowly, through months and years of weariness and pain; some will be called when life is most dear, and all its pursuits and pleasures charm them most; and some will stay long after trouble and disappointment have made it a weariness to live. The youngest of a family may be taken first. The strongest and most healthful may be struck down, while the feeble must wait on them in their prostration, and mourn for them when they are gone. The life of the strong may be sacrificed in the vain effort to save the weak, and sometimes the life saved may be much less precious than the one lost in the act of giving help. One who has been waiting and expecting to go any day for years may at last be taken by surprise. One may be called when his plans for worldly business are mature and in most successful operation; another when all his earthly affairs are most unsettled, and no one can fill his place, and his removal will cause the greatest embarrassment to his dearest friends. Another must go to the house appointed for all the living just as he has completed every arrangement to spend his declining years in retirement and peace. One may toil for years in patience and poverty and disappointment, and when at last the hour of success comes he must leave it for others to enjoy. Another may have little of struggle or conflict, less of failure or disappointment, and yet he, too, just as certainly must die.

Such are the inevitable conditions of this earthly life

of ours. It may seem hard, but we cannot change what God has appointed. It may seem mysterious, but no philosophy of ours can make it plain. It may be that in its mystery, which looks so dark, lies hidden God's greatest mercy. And the gospel tells the affecting story of affliction and death coming upon the family that Jesus most tenderly loved, just to assure us in the most human and touching manner that it is the portion, even of the most beloved and favored of the children of God, in this world to suffer and to die. It is no sign that God has forsaken them, or even that they have fallen into some great sin and need especial chastisement, that the day in their habitation is darkened, and the light of some life, dear to them as their own, is put out.

We have only to conform all our earthly plans to the common lot, and make the best use of this earthly life by learning how to live in the great and blessed life to come. If we accustom ourselves to think of death as the beginning of blessed and immortal life, the thought will cheer us in our trials and help us in our work. It need not bring a shadow upon our spirits or a pang to our hearts to consider that we are every moment hovering upon the borders of a bright and beautiful land, where all the inhabitants are blessed, and we may at any time hear the call to step over the border and walk with the King of that country in light. And it will make the days of this earthly life sweeter and purer if we spend them all in training ourselves for the blessed life to come.

An aged woman, whom I well knew, was about to remove from the city to the country. She was going back to the home of her youth, where the memories of her childhood lingered with fond recollection, and the graves of her family clustered in the quiet valley. She had reason to expect that several more years of life would be added to the threescore and ten which she had already completed. She was in the enjoyment of perfect health, her temperament was cheerful and serene, and her eye was quick and clear to see the sunlight of God's blessing in every path. The spring was just opening in its beauty, and she thought that the blooming flowers and the singing birds were inviting her to return and spend the closing years of life amid the scenes where she first saw the green earth and looked up to the blue heavens with the wondering eyes of a child.

On the morning before the day appointed for her departure she felt a slight twinge of pain. Towards evening it grew so severe that a physician was called to say whether she could safely take the short journey of eighteen miles on the morrow. After a slight examination he withdrew from the room and told the family that in less than forty-eight hours she must go upon that longer journey whence none ever return. They asked if she ought to know it. He said, "Yes; and I will tell her, for I know that the news will not take her by surprise." He went back to the room and in clear, calm, and kindly words told her that in less than two days' time she must go, not to the green valley of her youth-

ful home, but to the undiscovered country whence none return.

She heard the announcement without a look of surprise or a tremor of agitation. After a moment's pause with eyes closed in silent thought, she looked up to her physician and family and said with perfect calmness and serenity, "I am ready." "Ready to give up the fondly cherished return to the home of youth?" "Yes." "Ready to part with all earthly friends, possessions, and pleasures?" "Yes." "Ready at such brief warning to enter upon the changeless destinies of the unseen world?" "Yes." "Had she any wishes to express or any directions to give in reference to her worldly affairs?" "No." She had done all that long before. For years she had never gone out of her house without leaving everything as she would have done had she known she would never come back.

And with such perfect composure, such completeness of preparation, in full reliance upon her immortal Saviour, she waited for the summons. And when the call came from above in less than forty-eight hours, according to her own word she was ready, and she departed as if going upon a pleasant journey to a beautiful and beloved home. She loved life and she lived in the cheerful enjoyment of all earthly blessings. But she was ready to go and begin a better and a happier life than she could hope to enjoy in the green valley of her youthful home. To her there was no shadow on the face of the angels that came to conduct her emancipated

spirit to the mansions of rest. And in like manner peaceful and blessed shall be the departure of all who use this life in preparing for that which is to come, and who are always ready to go, either upon hard service here, or higher service there, when the Master calls.

When the fatal sickness fell upon Lazarus at Bethany, his alarmed and afflicted sisters sent and told Jesus. They were in trouble and they had reason to fear the worst, but it was a calm and confiding message which they sent: "Lord, behold he whom thou lovest is sick." The bearer of the heavy tidings must make his way down the steep and stony path to Jericho. He must then cross the Jordan and search the wild and mountainous region beyond, where Jesus had retired with his disciples. The going and returning must be a journey of days. And yet there is no sign of hurry or of impatience in the message which the sisters sent. They safely presumed that the love of Jesus for their sick and dying brother would prompt him to do all that their own love could desire to have done. It was enough for them that Jesus should know that Lazarus was sick.

I remember well to have been sent, when a child, as the bearer of heavy tidings to a family living some miles distant. I was instructed only to say to an afflicted sister that her brother, whom she greatly loved, was dead. In that case, too, it was taken for granted that a sincere affection for the stricken family would suggest whatever was best to be done. I was not told to ask the friends at a distance to come to those upon whom the stroke

had fallen most heavily. I was only to say to the sister who for many days had been expecting the message, Thy brother is dead. It was not for a moment supposed that such a message could be received with indifference, or that no response would be made to the tidings which I carried.

Such confidence had the afflicted sisters at Bethany in the warmth and sincerity of the love which Jesus bore for them and for their dying brother. And it was the most natural thing in the world that they should send so brief and simple a message to him when they were so greatly afflicted—"Behold, he whom thou lovest is sick." They need not ask him to come to their relief. He will do what is best for them, even though it may cost his life. They need not protest their love to him as a reason why he should know their trouble. His love to them is greater than theirs to him. On that they can rely better than upon any claim which might come from their hospitality to him in his need, or from the affection with which they turned to him in their great affliction.

Our risen and glorified Lord is as worthy of our utmost confidence, now that he sits upon the throne of heaven, as he was when he came a homeless wanderer to be entertained at a friendly house in Bethany. It is better to plead his love to us than ours to him when we seek his help. Our love to him is fitful and imperfect at the best. His love to us is infinite and everlasting. And our faith in the strength and constancy of his love should not fail

us when sickness darkens the light of our homes and death enters the household.

The first and best thing to do in the dark day of affliction is to send the tidings of our trouble upon the swift wings of prayer unto Jesus. Nothing that touches our hearts with joy or grief is too trifling to be told to him. The greatest sorrow can be easily borne with such help as he can give. Our greatest Friend will feel himself wronged if we pour out our grief and talk loud and eagerly of our gladness to others and shut our hearts and our lips to him.

For the great sorrows of life there is little alleviation; there is no absolute cure save that which the coming of Jesus brings to the weary heart. And if we seek the help of Jesus first, we shall spare ourselves much disappointment in looking to others for consolation. Human sympathy is indeed precious in the time of trouble. The bravest heart is braced and strengthened for the battle of life by the silent looks and the kind words of friends. But he who has Jesus for a Friend can rejoice and be glad, though it should seem to him that he has no other. When those who have exhausted every other resource in vain are constrained to look at last to Jesus for rest, they are filled with surprise and joy to find that the best and greatest Friend was all the while knocking at the door and waiting to be admitted.

The little child runs to the mother with the tale of every joy and every sorrow. And when we become like children in trust and in willingness to be taught, we shall

go as willingly and as naturally to our one great Father with all our griefs and all our joys. The cares and toils, the hopes and fears, the gains and losses of which we freely speak to our human friends, will still be named with simple and heartfelt confidence when we speak to our Father in prayer. It is due to him that we shall rely upon the depth and sincerity of his interest in all that concerns us. If Jesus could say the very hairs of your head are all numbered before God, surely we may assume that no grief or joy of ours is too small to be told to our Father.

Our Father does not need to be importuned into an interest in our welfare. The very trial which tasks our faith most severely and makes it seem to us for the time that he has forsaken us, has been sent in mercy to give us more peace and confidence in him when the trial is past. The whole earthly mission of Jesus is an infinite demonstration of the depth of the divine love for the helpless and the unworthy. Against all the suggestions of unbelief, against all the discouragements which arise from new discoveries of our need, we have this one unfailing assurance—"He that spared not his own Son, but delivered him up for us all, how shall he not with him also freely give us all things?" Surely we cannot come to such a Friend too often; we cannot ask too much of him; we cannot trust too confidingly in his promise not to withhold from us any good thing. Come what may come, let it be our first resort in the sorest trial and the darkest day to go and tell Jesus.

When the message from the sisters at Bethany came to Jesus in his retreat beyond Jordan, he replied immediately—"This sickness is not unto death." The messenger returned with joy, hurrying along the steep and stony track of the mountain road, impatient to relieve the anxious household with the glad intelligence that the beloved brother should not die. Never did herald from the battle-field carry tidings of victory with greater joy than that messenger hasted back to the house in Bethany with the answer of Jesus. What must have been his surprise and confusion on reaching the house to find that Lazarus was already in his grave! How much it would add to the grief and perplexity of the bereaved sisters when he should tell them what Jesus had said! How sorely would it task their confidence in the truth, the wisdom, and the love of their greatest and best Friend to have word brought from him that their brother should not die on the very evening of the day when they had followed his cold and lifeless body with loud lamentations and many tears to the tomb!

"Had Jesus sent that word in mistaken kindness to keep their hearts from despondency, while as yet himself did not know what the end would be? Was he experimenting with the power of hope to sustain the suffering and to shake off the grasp of disease? Had Jesus promised what he could not perform? Had his great power forsaken him, and must those who had looked to him for miraculous aid at last confess that he had become as weak as they? Had he given the

positive assurance of recovery to his dearest friend the very day that others had carried that friend in sorrow to the grave? Had Jesus designedly stayed in his distant hiding-place to save himself from witnessing a scene of suffering which he could not relieve? Had he refused to come back with the messenger that he might avoid the distrust and reproaches of those who once confided in his power to heal all manner of disease?"

Such doubts and fears, such conjectures and questionings must have tried the hearts of the afflicted sisters of Bethany, during the four dark days of mourning, more severely than the actual death of their brother. They had always known that Lazarus and themselves also must sooner or later die, but they had hoped that the word of Jesus would never fail. If he had only stayed where he was after receiving tidings of their affliction, they could have endured that, for they knew that it would be at the peril of his life if he came to them. But how must it have wrung their hearts with anguish to think of their brother sleeping in the cold tomb, and at the same time of the strange and apparently mistaken word of Jesus—"This sickness is not unto death."

So is it with us all in the dark days of affliction and despondency. The cloud casts its thick shadows all around us, our hopes fail, our hearts are weary, and life is a burden. But if we walk trustingly on in the darkness till we learn the great lesson of faith, Jesus himself will take us by the hand and lead us forth to the light,

and we shall see his face in a broader and brighter day. In the review of the past we shall learn that our infinite Helper was by our side and bending over us with unutterable love when we were prostrate and thought ourselves utterly forsaken. We never see him as he sees us. We are never as ready to receive his help as he is to relieve our need. We have attained the highest joy of life when we have learned to take what God gives with a grateful heart, and to live for his glory equally in sickness and in health, in abundance and in want.

The Son of God is glorified, the word of peace is preached with power to the world by all who suffer with Christ in patience and in hope, waiting for the consolation which God will send in his own time. The days and nights of weariness and pain, the years of waiting and hoping against hope, are precious to those who walk the fiery furnace of affliction, or sit still and uncomplaining in the house of mourning in company with the Man of Sorrows.

It is not lost time to wait when our waiting is upon God. It is the best kind of work to be ready for his coming in the call of duty and in the gift of love. The highest service is sometimes rendered by those who can only wait. Some must wait in sickness and pain. Some must wait like the sisters at Bethany under the cloud of affliction and sorrow, believing that God's way is best, even when it seems blind and dark, and wondering why the light should be so long in coming. Some must

wait in poverty and disaster, seeming to themselves to work harder and wiser than the successful, and yet always failing. Some must wait under discouragement and deferred hope, until every resource is exhausted and no help comes. Some must wait in sore conflict with trial and temptation, compelled at last to surrender all faith, or else to say—Though he slay me, yet will I trust in him. Some must wait under the burden of years and infirmity, feeling that they have nothing left to live for, and wondering why God does not kindly come and take them out of the world. But if the waiting be upon God, with willingness to work when strength is given and equal willingness to suffer when the necessity comes, God will accept both the doing and the suffering with equal grace, and he will give to both his own exceeding great reward.

Be patient then, good friend, under all the trials and discouragements sent by God's providence. You do not know how tenderly your Father's heart yearns over you when he inflicts the pain. It is because he loves you that he takes the rod. The divine compassion goes deeper than your sorrow. It enfolds and soothes your troubled spirit when it is weighed down with discouragement and weary with the heavy burden. Look up when the cloud clears away and you will see your Father's face full of light, and you will hear his voice speaking to his suffering child in the gentle accents of peace and love.

And I beg you, good friend, not to think of patience

as the Angel of sorrow, sent only to the house of mourning and bearing messages only to the stricken and afflicted. The good angels, whose coming fills our homes with light, and whose guidance makes us joyous and strong in the hardest journey, all come from a world where the inhabitants never weep, never mourn. And the spirit that makes earthly households seem most like heaven, says least of pain and sorrow, but breathes gentleness and peace, gladness and hope into all hearts.

I go to a house where some dear member of the family has been worn out and taken away by long and lingering pain. And as they talk over the dark scenes through which they have passed, their voices become soft and gentle and their eyes kindle with heavenly light when they say, He was so patient, he spoke to us all so cheerfully, so tenderly, to the very last, that it seemed as if we were the suffering ones, and he had been sent as a good angel to comfort our hearts.

I love to have the bereaved and the afflicted cherish such blessed memories of the dark scenes of trial and suffering through which they have passed. It tells me that the departed, when they go to the home of rest, carry with them a spirit which makes it seem to them as if they had lived there before, and they have only come back from a wearisome journey to rest and rejoice with congenial and happy friends.

I do not hear anything else named so often as evidence that a departed one was prepared for heaven as the fact that he was patient under pain. And when we

so speak of patience under trial as evidence of meetness for the blessed life, we think of it, not as the Angel of sorrow, with drooping wing and ever downcast eye, having full cause for weeping, yet stifling the choking sigh and holding back the rising tear, but rather as the calm and exalted spirit that lives above all earthly pain and trouble in the light of peace, and loves so much to sing of salvation that it never learns the songs of sorrow. Patience is serene and gentle, yet joyous and strong. The ransomed of the Lord are the patient ones of earth, and yet they go up to the gates of heaven with everlasting joy. And when they enter the great assembly of the blessed with the look that last shed its light in the chamber of death, they are ready to sing in unison with voices that never learned the notes of sorrow.

We all have much to learn concerning the sweetness, the power, and the beauty of what many mistakenly call the sad and suffering virtue of patience. There are many things that we must wait for, however much we want them, and some, that we want most, will never come, though we wait ever so long. Success will come soon enough if it comes in God's time. It may be better for you to lose what another man gains. Your loss may make you richer than his gain makes him. The disappointment of a present hope may be the dawn of a new day, and the first step in a better life.

Our heavenly Father is teaching us by the appointments of his providence every hour. We are not left to run at large like children whom nobody owns. Every

day of life we are at school under our Father's eye. He is teaching us in a thousand ways that the best of life is that which draws us nearest to him. The things that look dark and inexplicable now are lessons for us to learn in this brief school-time of earth that we may be prepared to enter upon the eternal manhood of the blessed life. He has many things to tell us, but we cannot bear them now. He withholds much from our present knowledge, that our sight may be strong to see in the infinite and endless day.

This great Teacher, Father, Friend, is ever working in us and around us, encompassing us in the arms of affection, offering us gifts of priceless worth, speaking to us in tones that the heart can hear, and all to make us dutiful, patient, happy children. He would give us peace that passeth all understanding, love that casteth out all fear, rest that shall make us strong and renew our life, hope that shall steady and calm the soul amid all the agitations of the world, faith that shall hold fast to heaven and eternity when all earthly things fail.

Jesus at the Grave.

Jesus groaning in himself, cometh to the grave.—JOHN xi. 38.

XVI.

JESUS AT THE GRAVE.

STANDING by the grave of one whom he deeply loved, attended by weeping mourners, himself soon to die on the cross, Jesus claims the keys of death. In the presence of the king of terrors, surrounded by the trophies of his power, Jesus asserts his right to pass through all the realm of the prince of darkness, and bring forth its captives into the kingdom of life. He makes proclamation to all the children of mortality, of all nations and all ages, that he himself is the resurrection and the life, and whosoever believeth in him shall never die.

These surely are the words of a king and a conqueror—a King to reign over all the gifts and joys of life, and a Conqueror to subdue all the fear and power of death. He assumes the right and the power to give life eternal to whom he will. He stands forth in his living person, the sole and divine Champion for the defence and the deliverance of the whole human race, for the arrest of that wide wasting plague which has loaded all languages with words of woe, and ploughed the earth in all its climes and seasons with countless graves, and made the sea a sleeping-place for the dead.

This is not simply the word of a prophet, who comes into the world upon a mission of instruction, and

who speaks only the word as it is given to him from above. He is himself in his own divine person the truth which he proclaims. He is the way which millions have sought, and wept because they found it not. He is the life which he offers in such fulness to men that those who receive it shall never die. He comes to destroy death, and to clothe the dying with immortality.

These words, which Jesus spoke by the roadside as he drew near to Bethany, have already gone out with light and blessing unto the ends of the earth. Ten thousand thousand times have these words brought peace and hope to troubled hearts, in the darkened chamber of suffering, in the hush of the house of mourning, in the still presence of the dead, and beside the open grave. They have been repeated in gentle whispers by the bedside of the dying, and they have been sung and chanted in the great cathedral with the melodious thunder of the many-voiced organ to swell the strain, and the lofty arches and the long-drawn aisles have answered with echoes, and the dust on the tombs of the mighty dead has been stirred by the sound. Faith has graven the blessed words upon the gateway of the grave to proclaim its triumph over the king of terrors. They have been written upon the walls of dungeons, in the chambers of torture, along the galleries of catacombs, where the sun never shone, in the blood and ashes of martyrs as a testimony that those who believe in Jesus can never die. The great host of the redeemed from all lands, from all times, passing on in continued procession to the

heavenly Zion, have marched through the gates of death to the same song.

O, ye sons and daughters of affliction, who go to weep at the grave of your beloved and refuse to be comforted because they come not back, and they give no answer to your repeated call; ye fearful and trembling, who dread the approach of the last bitter hour, and cannot bear to think of closing your eyes forever upon this living world; ye disappointed and murmuring, whose earthly hopes are all buried in the deep grave of the past, and whose daily experience is only a renewal of murmuring and disappointment, hear the words of Jesus—"I am the resurrection and the life." Not all the harps of heaven could breathe such peace into the troubled soul as all may attain through faith in the meaning and mighty power of these words. Take them deeply to heart. Learn by experience what words can never teach. Gain the victory over fear, sorrow and disappointment by trusting in him who alone has the right to speak the words in his own name, because he has eternal life to give to all that ask.

The most cherished expectations of earthly good may be utterly cut off. The temporal possessions which have been guarded with every possible security may take wings and fly away. He who labors hardest in the beaten track of this earthly life may find the least reward. The rich and the poor, the old and the young, the healthful and the diseased, the honored and the despised, will all die. No one can tell in what direction

his sorest affliction will come. No prophet of the Lord will be sent to prepare the way before the messenger of death.

And yet the word of Jesus can never fail, even in a world over which death has reigned for ages. "He that believeth in me shall never die." The hopes upon which such an one relies most confidently shall ever live. The sources from which he derives his deepest, purest joy, shall never fail. His most precious treasures shall be ever increasing in security and in value. For his greatest wants he shall be ever finding a more certain and full supply. The objects of desire on which he fixes his heart most intently shall grow in value the more severely he tests their worth. The most cherished attachments which he forms in the journey of life shall be renewed and confirmed forever in a better land. One infinite Friend, who can command and bestow all possible blessing, shall always be ready to do for him exceeding abundantly above all that he can ask or think. The grave shall be to him the gateway of life, and through its dark portal he shall pass into the land where there shall be no more night.

Surely of such an one it is safe to say—"He shall never die." All that constitutes his real being, all that makes life best worth possessing, his thought, his hope, his love, his capacity for deep and endless joy, shall be alive when death has done its utmost upon his body; he himself shall be alive then and shall live forever more. He shall never lose the joy, the glory, the blessedness

of that life whose everflowing fountain is faith in the Son of God. To possess such faith even now is to be raised above all fear of death, and to be indifferent to the destroyer's utmost power.

Xerxes wept when he surveyed the millions of his mighty army, covering the plains in their march, and the thousands of his ships riding on the sea. The leader of the greatest host that ever moved at the command of any one man, he could not refrain from tears when he thought soon all his living and exultant legions would moulder down to dust. Alexander of Macedon wept when he found himself master of the world, and yet less satisfied than he was when he began the career of conquest. Napoleon, the hero of a hundred battles, the idolized commander of a half million of warriors, the autocrat of kings, who cast down thrones and changed the destiny of nations, wept over the body of one poor soldier slain in his service. When directing the stormy tide of battle he seemed to be the incarnation of power, as pitiless as death, as remorseless as the grave. But when the glory and the magnificence of battle had rolled away, and the earth was covered thick with the dying and the dead, even he could weep at the ruin he had made.

There is something very awful in the tears as well as in the power and wrath of such mighty conquerors. They rule the destiny of millions. They make themselves the terror of nations. Their movements are watched as men watch the progress of the pestilence in

fear lest it shall fall upon them and make their habitations waste. By the flattery of friends and the fear of foes they are exalted as gods in the earth, and they accept the homage of men as if it were their due. But their tears prove them to be men, weak, passionate, disappointed, helpless men.

The tears of the Son of God, wept at the grave of Lazarus and over the impending woes of unhappy Jerusalem, have a far deeper and more awful meaning than the tears of human weakness or humbled pride or disappointed ambition. He did not weep because the mighty work which he had undertaken to do surpassed his power, or because the desire of his soul had failed to be satisfied in securing the salvation of the lost. It is the most astonishing proof of the depth of his sympathy that he should weep with the afflicted while he possessed the power to bind up the broken heart and to restore the dead to life.

Jesus could bring back the lost treasure to the desolate and afflicted family. But he could not be insensible to the grief of those who mourned and would not be comforted just because they did not dare to believe in his power to raise the dead. If he could bring them thus to believe in him, then this and all other griefs that might come upon them would be turned into joy. And however full and satisfying the consolation which he was able to bestow in this one dark hour, he must needs weep with those who wept because they had not yet learned to trust him always and for everything.

The mother subjects the child to a brief disappointment in order that she may teach the spirit of obedience, and that she may bestow a richer gratification in the end. And yet she weeps from unaffected sympathy with the child's short-lived grief. So Jesus wept because the depth of his own sympathy made the grief which others felt as real to him as it was to them.

This is the astonishing revelation which baffles all reason and dazzles the vision of the loftiest faith—the sympathy of the infinite One with the grief of our poor hearts. There is nothing in prophecy, nothing in miracles, nothing in the whole creation, so new, so wonderful, so enrapturing as the expression of the divine pity in the tears of the weeping Son of God. There is no other passage in the gospel story better fitted to tell us how perfectly Christ combines sympathy with us in all our grief, and power to help us to the full extent of our need.

If I should stand at the grave of my dearest human friend, with power to wake him from the sleep of death with a word, and I intended to use that power the next moment in restoring him to life, and my living friends were about me weeping in their affliction for the loss of the one dead, I do not think I should weep with them. I should not groan with anguish or be troubled in spirit as Jesus was. I should be so full of confidence and joy that they were so soon to have all their grief turned into gladness that I could not weep. I should feel that my buried friend was still so completely within my reach

and the hearing of my voice that I could not feel the loss of him. But if I had no such power I should be very cold and unfeeling at heart if I were not afflicted as well as they.

So Jesus wept at the grave of Lazarus. He groaned in spirit and was troubled with the unaffected grief of his true human heart. It was no pretended sorrow for the purpose of affecting the minds of those who stood by. He was there in his compassionate and perfect manhood to weep for the same cause that made others weep, just as he was upon the cross to die as men die. And yet there, also, under the visible aspect of the same perfect manhood, was the divine Christ, the incarnate and redeeming Son of God, at the grave of Lazarus to speak the word which should restore the dead to life.

And then again Jesus must have been moved by something more than the sorrow of the little company around him when he groaned in spirit and was troubled even to tears. He saw, indeed, quite enough to make him weep in the affliction which death had brought upon one quiet and beloved family. But besides all that, he bore upon his heart the sorrows and the desolations of ages. His ear was open to the wail of the suffering and afflicted in all lands, in all times. To him the woes of the whole human race broke forth in one exceeding great and bitter cry, and his soul was in agony to relieve them all. He could hear the moan of the great ocean of human grief, breaking from its unsounded depths upon all the shores of time, and rolling the awful burden of sor-

row into the abyss of eternity. He knew that the history of millions for ages to come would be written in blood and blotted with tears.

He could comfort the bereaved sisters of Bethany by awaking their brother from the sleep of death. But the mighty miracle itself would be only a drop of consolation to the infinite ocean of human grief. It would arouse and enflame the hatred of the rulers against him, and thus ensure and hasten his own death. The risen Lazarus must die again. The comforted sisters must mourn again. Themselves and all dear to them must die. The pitiless ravages of death must go on through all the earth. In the very hour when one was raised from the tomb thousands would die.

While the heart of Jesus was moved with infinite pity for all the afflicted and suffering, and with the desire to relieve them all, he knew how hard it would be to arrest the tide of human woe which had been flowing through all ages, and gathering strength in every year of its course. While he was willing to give his own life-blood to put out the torturing fires of guilt and remorse in the human soul, he knew that even that mighty and mysterious sacrifice would fail to touch the hearts of many. All this sin and sorrow of a weeping and dying world being represented to the mind of Jesus by the grief of the little company about him at Bethany, he wept. He groaned in spirit and was troubled.

The tears of Jesus, the deep and unaffected sorrows of the divine and mighty Saviour, show better than long

study and labored reasonings how exceedingly evil and bitter a thing we have all done in breaking away from the true and safe law of life, and bringing ourselves under the power of darkness and death. If one who can raise the dead with a word weeps over our sad condition, then our fall must be deep, and the work of recovery must be hard. God might thunder denunciations against sin from the heavens every hour. He might write threatenings in letters of fire upon the sky every night. He might cause the earth to groan and belch forth fires in every land, and the billows of the ocean to lift up their voices on every shore in wrathful testimony against transgression. And yet all that array of terror would not show us as deeply, as sadly as the tears of Jesus, how dreadful a thing it is to disobey our Father, and how hard a task it is for infinite love to save from the consequences of such disobedience.

That the Holy One should weep, that the Son of the Blessed should be troubled in spirit, that the divine and mighty Conqueror of death should be bowed down with anguish, and utter his sorrows in groans and tears, is, indeed, a mystery that may cause the heavens to wonder and the earth to be astonished. It can be explained only by admitting that the ruin from which Christ would rescue us is awful and immeasurable, and that our salvation is a work which demands the utmost resources of infinite power. If anything less would suffice, then Jesus would not have wept in agony of soul, the Son of God would not have died.

That Mighty One who wept by the grave of Lazarus could walk upon the waves, and hush the storm, and create abundance in the desert, and call legions of angels to his aid, and raise the dead. But he took on himself a greater task in becoming a man of sorrows, and in bearing the sins of a lost world. In executing that great commission he must destroy death and bring life and immortality to light. He must open the prison-doors for those whom sin had bound in everlasting chains. He must spoil the powers of darkness, and return to his heavenly throne with redemption for the brightest of his many crowns. He must lift up the fallen and the guilty from their degradation and make them equal with the angels, sharers of his own glory and kings unto God forever.

And Christ, in accomplishing his great work of redemption, must do it in such a way and in the use of such influences and instructions as to maintain justice and encourage obedience, to honor divine law and to cover the pride and power of sin with shame and everlasting contempt. No wonder that the Son of God himself, under the pressure of such a burden, groaned in spirit and wept with an anguish that was deeper than the utmost depths of human sorrow.

While, then, Jesus wept in sympathy with the little company of mourners around him, while his own heart felt the blow which had fallen upon his beloved friend, he wept still more bitterly for those who would not believe either in his power or in his love, even though he

should call back the dead to life before their eyes. He wept for a deeper and more awful death than that which had sent Lazarus to the tomb, the death of millions of souls delivered over in captivity to sin. He wept for the madness of multitudes who hear the word of life as though they heard it not. He wept for the strange infatuation of men who admit the truth of his word and pay all outward respect to the message as from God, and yet never receive it to their hearts. He wept for the whole race of man, that they should be so slow to receive him, so hard to be reclaimed, while countless woes in every land and bitter remorse in every heart testify to the need of a Saviour. He wept for the one great apostacy from God which has filled all homes with sorrow, and burdened all tongues of men with words of woe, and enticed countless multitudes into the way of darkness, and haunted the deeps of eternity with shapes of horror and prisons of despair. For all this, which makes up so much of man's life here, and casts such a pall of dread upon everything which lies beyond this life, Jesus wept. For this, the heavens might well be dissolved in tears and the whole creation groan and travail in pain together. To arrest the progress of this world-wide, long-continued, and ever-deepening woe, the Son of God wrestled in pain and sorrow till the sweat wrung out from his great agony fell like drops of blood upon the ground. For this, he bowed himself at last in death upon the cross.

The words with which the evangelist describes the

feelings of Jesus as he approached the tomb of Lazarus express indignation as well as grief. We ask at what the weeping and compassionate Saviour could be indignant at such a moment. We can only say that his anger burned against the one guilty cause, which has done and will still do so much to fill the world with wailing and sorrow. He could pour out his pity for sinners in flowing tears, and yet he must regard sin itself as the fit subject of indignation and wrath. He was willing to suffer and die that the guilty might be forgiven and the lost might be saved, but he could not be indifferent to the enormity of their sin. And surely there is nothing in the universe of which we have so much reason to be afraid as the displeasure of him who died for our salvation. The proud and the mighty might brave the indignation of an inexorable judge, but who can stand before the wrath of the Lamb?

And now Jesus, groaning in himself, comes to the grave. It is a cave cut in the hill-side, such as we see still in many places beyond Bethany on the way to Jericho. The entrance is closed by a great stone, so large that two or three men must unite their strength to take it away. The chief mourners gather closely around him, and curious spectators follow to hear what will be said and to see what will be done. This mighty Son of God, whose voice the dead in their graves shall all hear, stands at the door of the one tomb in which his beloved friend lies buried. But he pauses in the moment when all eyes are fixed upon him with the most intense and

wondering expectation, and he looks around him for human help. His infinite and divine power will not perform the mighty miracle of raising the dead until human hands have performed the common and trifling task of taking away the stone.

He can summon legions of God's mighty angels and they will come at his call. He can bid the mountains depart and the hills remove and they will obey his word. He can command the stormy winds, and speak rebukingly to the boisterous waves, and they shall hear his voice and be still. But he stands at the tomb of his buried friend, as if his were the feeblest hand in all the company, and he says to those around him—"Take ye away the stone."

The divine power of the great Master of life keeps itself in sympathy with human weakness even in performing its mightiest works. He will not display his awful and infinite might in raising the dead unless the feeble, the afflicted, and the helpless shall perform their part and prepare the way. The stone lies heavy and cold at the door of the tomb, and the body of Lazarus lies as dead and cold within, yet the voice of the Son of God will not go forth in quickening power, it will not be heard by the silent sleeper in his shroud, he will not know that Jesus stands so near, unless the helping hands of men shall roll away the stone. The feeble must come to the help of the mighty, and the result will be life from the dead.

The inconstant faith of the afflicted fails them in the

very moment when all their grief is about to be changed to a new and surprising joy. They interpose objections and hindrances in the way of Jesus just as he is ready to speak the word which will lift the heaviest burden from their hearts. "Oh, no! Take not away the stone! we cannot bear to look upon the face of our brother, changed as it is now by the decay and the revolting ghastliness of death! We would remember him as we saw him in the pale and placid slumber of death, with the gentle smile with which he bade us farewell still lingering upon his lip. No, no, take not away the stone! It is too late! There can be no trace of life or loveliness left upon the face of our beloved, and we cannot bear the sight."

So the broken-hearted mourners of Bethany hesitate and hold back the arm of infinite power, when Jesus stands before them, and they have only to do his bidding and their lost brother shall be restored to life. A word from the lips of Jesus could cast that stone into the depths of the sea. He need only say to the rocky mountain that rises between them and Jerusalem, Be thou removed, and the next glance of the eye would find it gone. And yet he pauses and reasons with the afflicted ones, and persuades them to permit him to help them in his own way, and to use the aid which he chooses in his divine work. Infinite power and infinite mercy wait for the consent of human hearts and for the help of human hands. If the afflicted will not take his word, if those who stand around will not put forth their

effort, as if divine might needed their aid, then the miracle will not be performed, the dead will not be raised, the living will be left to mourn for their beloved as those who refuse to be comforted.

It is upon like conditions that Jesus still performs his mighty work of raising to spiritual life those who are dead and buried in the stony tomb of a worldly and self-seeking life. There is much for human faith and human hands to do before the cold, dead world will hear the voice of the Son of God and wake to new life. Jesus comes and stands in the midst of communities and congregations, ready to speak the word which shall make the dead hear and the living rejoice. But he turns to his friends and followers, his consecrated and covenanted disciples, who have besought him to come, and he waits for them to take the cold, heavy stone of unbelief from their hearts. He will wake the dead, he will make the nations hear his voice, he will fill the habitations of the living with the songs of ransomed and immortal millions. But, first of all, his followers must have faith in the reality of his presence among them, and in his power to save. Let the daily life of every disciple be such as he would wish it to be in the visible presence of the Master, and then the blind shall see Jesus, too, and the deaf shall hear his voice.

There is many a city now, as of old, where Jesus cannot do many mighty works in the conversion and salvation of men, because of the unbelief of his own disciples. If they could only have faith such as the bereaved of

Bethany were required to have in the presence of the tomb, they, too, would see the glory of God in the coming forth of thousands to the new life of love and consecration to Christ. The sceptic may scoff, the indifferent may pass idly by, the curious may wonder and speculate, and none may dream that themselves are ever to be brought humbly and penitently to bow at the feet of Jesus, and rejoice in him more than in all the pleasures of a worldly life. And yet they will hear his voice, and he will make them all his own as soon as his friends and followers venture to take him at his word when he says—"All things are possible to them that believe."

It is not money, nor talent, nor learning, nor opportunity, so much as faith and personal consecration, that the church needs to fulfil its great commission to make disciples of all nations. All other needed things will come as fast as they are wanted when once the church shall arise and put on the strength of all-conquering faith and the beautiful garments of all-consecrated lives. No arguments of the sceptic, no opposition of the wicked, no indifference of the worldly can stand before the truth when it speaks by the faith and labor and sacrifice of a united and consecrated church. All the riches and power and glory of the earth shall be given to the followers of Christ, just as soon as it becomes safe for them to be intrusted with such gifts, just as soon as they have faith and love enough to give all they have to Christ. They are kept poor and weak in comparison with the great powers of the earth only because they have not yet fully learned to count all

things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Jesus Christ. All riches and talents and powers shall be theirs just as soon as they are ready to use them well. The world, that lies dead in trespasses and sins, shall hear the voice of the Son of God, and come forth to new life when the followers of Jesus arise at his command, and roll away the stone of unbelief from their own hearts.

But now at last the stone is taken away from the place where the dead was laid, and the silent company stand before the open tomb in the hush of breathless and awful expectation. The last act of human faith is done and the believing mourners are waiting to see the glory of God. If the voice of Jesus avails in this case to call back the lost life, it must be a display of the same power which gives life to all creatures that live. The daughter of Jairus at Capernaum had been but a little while dead, when Jesus touched her hand and said—Arise, and her spirit came again. The grave had not yet received the young man when Jesus touched the bier at the gate of Nain, and he that was dead rose up and began to speak. In such a case the caviller might say that the apparent death was only a trance, and the asserted miracle of the restoration was only a natural waking from sleep.

But here is a grave opened so long after the burial that the living friends shrink from beholding the form of the beloved in decay. Here stands the Prince of life face to face with the revolting aspect and the dread re-

ality of death. Will he have power to make his voice heard in that mysterious world where the soul of Lazarus has been so many days wandering or at rest? Will the dark kingdom of death throw open its inexorable doors and permit its new subject to return in answer to the call of the Son of man? Shall the emancipated spirit, having once escaped from its fetters and flown forth upon the boundless range of the universe, return at the command of Jesus and consent to take up its old burden of suffering flesh and tread the narrow rounds of its earthly prison-house again? Perhaps a still more fearful question might rise in the mind of some standing before the tomb—whether in fact there be any spiritual essence to go forth from the body, and live in the freedom of an unwearied and immortal life, while its clay habitation moulders back to dust. And if there be no such spirit, then the call of the Son of God for its return at the tomb will receive no answer, and the hope of immortality will die in that one grave.

Such is the awful test to which the power, the authority, the whole mission of Jesus must be subjected at the tomb of Lazarus. It is the most critical and decisive moment in his whole ministry. In the company of silent and wondering spectators that stand around is represented the whole race of man held in bondage to death, and waiting to see whether the word of their offered Deliverer shall avail to throw open the doors of the prison-house and set the captive millions free.

If the departed soul of Lazarus comes not back at

the call of Jesus, then there is no hope for man, and the whole world is given over to the endless and absolute dominion of death. If this changed and ghastly form, now as lifeless as the earth and rock of the tomb, shall respond to the voice of Jesus and stand forth in the fulness of restored life, if the mind that thought and felt and lived reanimates its decayed body and proves to be the same person in feeling and knowledge and affection, then surely all may live by faith in him who can thus recall the dead to life. Trusting in this mighty Conqueror we can triumph over the one great destroyer, whose presence has smitten every earthly home with desolation, and whose dreaded name has covered the unseen world with the pall of darkness and horror.

Imagining ourselves standing with the waiting company at the grave of Lazarus, and knowing that such mighty consequences depend upon the utterance of the word when Jesus cries with a loud voice—"Come forth," we are breathless with expectation. Like the weeping sisters who most desired to see the face of their restored brother, we are almost afraid to have him speak the word which, when spoken, must confirm or extinguish our dearest hopes forever. It would be so dreadful if he should call and there should be no answer, we should stand by the open tomb in blank despair. We should roll the stone again to its place, and turn away, as the disciples did when they left his own body in the tomb and went home to weep over their lost hopes, and over the lost hopes of the world.

But in this awful crisis Jesus himself is calm, as he is ever wont to be when men are wild with fear or breathless with suspense. He no longer weeps, now that he has the work of infinite power to do. His prayer unto his Father is a thanksgiving, and his call upon the dead is a command as quickly obeyed as spoken. The form, so changed with decay that friends feared to look upon it, stands forth before all the company a living man, waiting only to be loosed from his grave-clothes, to return to his home in the strength and beauty of his young manhood. It is not the slow recovery by which the dying sometimes come back with feeble step and panting breath from the borders of the grave. It is not as when a strong man wakes suddenly from deep sleep, bewildered and lost. This deeper sleep of death passes instantaneously at the word of Jesus into full and conscious life. And again the mighty One who has performed the divine work of restoration looks around him for the help of human hands to loose the bands with which the dead was bound and let the living go.

So evermore must the human and divine co-operate in the mighty work of delivering captive souls from the bands of spiritual death. The voice of the Son of God alone can break the slumber of those who are sleeping the sleep of sin, and who would fain sleep on even unto death. But human faith can do much to prepare the way for the divine work, and human effort must ever be put forth to improve and confirm the victory which divine power has gained.

The walk back to the house with the living Lazarus in the midst of the company, and the eyes of all fixed on him with wonder and joy; the cries of the multitude that ran along the roadside and climbed up to housetops when they came to the village that they might see Jesus and his restored friend pass; the gladness that filled the hearts of the two sisters, and the look of awe and silent wonder that rested on all faces in that sacred home when Jesus once more took his customary place in the family, and all were there; the quietness and reverence with which the villagers moved about the streets and gathered in groups to converse, when the evening came on, are things which we can only conjecture, but to those present they were things to be remembered and rehearsed to their dying day.

Human curiosity searches the inspired record in vain to find what recollections the restored Lazarus brought back from that unseen world where his spirit was wandering while his body rested in the tomb. We are not told in what region of the far-off land he heard the voice which the dead shall all hear, and came as the servant comes at the call of the master. It was not to gratify such curiosity that Jesus unbound the gates of death and brought back the soul of his beloved friend. It was rather to prove beyond all question that the sceptre of his power is supreme over both worlds, and that those who trust in him can never go beyond the hearing of his voice or the reach of his hand.

The most acute of modern sceptics confesses that if

the resurrection of Lazarus be a reality, it demonstrates the divine authority of the whole gospel, and shuts up every candid mind to the logical necessity of believing in Jesus as the Son of God and the Saviour of the world. It is only necessary that the sacred record shall be studied with the same faith and fairness which the severest critics accord to other records of the past in order that the historic reality of the resurrection at Bethany may be established beyond question. And so this one mighty miracle stands forth as a complete and glorious demonstration of all that we need believe to be saved from the fear of man's last and greatest foe. This beloved and truthful man of Bethany, who came back from the unseen world at the call of Jesus, testifies, by his true and natural life, to all readers of the gospel history, that Jesus is Lord both of the dead and of the living. Hereby Christ proves his power to destroy death. With him for a guide, we can tread the darkest path and come forth to the light of life. With him for a friend, we can face the king of terrors without fear.

Jesus raised the dead body of Lazarus to life that all might trust in his power to restore spiritual life to the soul. He performs this greater miracle even now before the eyes of men whenever a weary, sin-burdened wanderer is drawn to him for rest. This new creation of fallen men to eternal life and glory by the power of Jesus is the great wonder which many find it hardest to believe. The philosophy of the time as taught by some

undertakes the task of explaining all appearances and forces, both of the material and spiritual world, without admitting any special interpositions of divine power. Common life is taken up with toil and hurry and competition. Between the two extremes one must be thoughtful and deeply in earnest to say—"We would see Jesus."

And yet the divine power is still in the world, creating new life as truly and evidently as it was when men saw the face of Jesus, and they stood by when he called Lazarus from the tomb with a word. All the true progress of the world towards a higher and a better life springs from the acceptance of this great fact, that men are adopted into the family of God and are made new creatures in Christ Jesus. The power to make wicked men holy, to change the ruling purpose of the heart from bad to good, is more needed for the improvement of mankind than the power to multiply the productions of the earth, the inventions of art, or the discoveries of science. When once Christ has brought men into sympathy with himself by the mighty appeal of his truth, they become children of God and joint heirs with him to the whole boundless creation, and then they have the ages of eternity in which to improve and enjoy their possessions.

When Jesus performed the great miracle of Bethany, he took a decisive step towards the appointed completion of his own earthly life. The work was seen by jealous eyes, and it was soon reported in Jerusalem,

with such comments as malice and falsehood could suggest. His enemies saw that what they did for his destruction must be done quickly. They could not long inflame the passions of the people against one who could call the dead from the grave in the open light of day, in the presence of many witnesses, and with the power of a single word.

From that day forth they took counsel together how they might put him to death. But his hour was not yet fully come. He must retire to a desert place for a while with his disciples, that he may teach them more fully concerning his kingdom on the earth. He must make one more circuit of instruction and mercy upon the borders of Samaria and Galilee. When he returns two months later to Bethany for the last time, it will be the great week of the Passover, and the last week before the cross. From this mountain village, where he restored the dead to life, he must go forth to his own death. From this quiet home, where he had been received so many times with loving hospitality, he must pass through the mockeries of Jerusalem and the agony of the cross, to his Father's house and his heavenly throne.

Rest at Ephraim.

Jesus went unto a country near to the wilderness, into a city called Ephraim, and there continued with his disciples.—JOHN xi. 54.

XVII.

REST AT EPHRAIM.

THE little city of Ephraim, on the borders of the wilderness between Judea and Samaria, was the last resting-place of our Lord before the great and final week of suffering at Jerusalem. He had come from beyond the Jordan to Bethany at the call of the two sisters, Martha and Mary, whose brother Lazarus was sick unto death. He had waked the dead from the four days' sleep in the grave, and all Jerusalem was ringing with the fame of the mighty miracle done at Bethany, only a half-hour's walk from the city walls. The people were greatly excited. They kept running back and forwards over Olivet to see the man who had been raised from the dead, and to tell all they could learn about the mighty Prophet of Nazareth. Many said that this must be the promised Deliverer of Israel, and that the chief men of the city ought to be the first to proclaim him Messiah and King. The rulers were afraid of revolt and revolution. The great council of the nation was assembled. After long and stormy debate, it was solemnly decreed that Jesus should be put to death.

But the Master's hour had not yet come. His great sacrifice must be on the Passover day, when a million strangers would be in Jerusalem to witness the awful

tragedy, and the returning pilgrims would carry tidings of the great event into all the earth. On the most sacred memorial day of Israel's deliverance out of bondage, the Lamb of God must in his own person complete and close the long series of sacrifices by offering himself once for all nations and for all time. When that day comes, appointed from of old, yet brought to pass by the guilty devices of men, the cross shall be set up for the wondering world to see and the victim will be ready.

Now for a while, as winter wears away and spring comes on, the Master will retire before the storm and leave the elements of rage and hate to grow until they break forth in one awful hour. The shadow of the cross falls upon his path wherever he goes. He can hear in the near distance the roar of the voices that shout—"Hosanna to the Son of David," and the response of as many more that cry—"Away with him, crucify him." He is more silent and more apart from his disciples than he was wont to be. When he speaks, their hearts are touched by the shade of deep and suppressed sorrow upon his face, and the thrill of tenderness and pity in his voice. They are less loud and passionate in their talk by the way, and a strange fear and wonder steals over them as they follow him, and wish to ask the cause of his sadness and are withheld by his silent look from intruding upon the sanctity of his sorrow.

He steals silently away from the house of his friends in Bethany while they are still bewildered with wonder

and joy over the great miracle of restoring the dead to life. He takes an unfrequented path northward, as if he were going back to Galilee. It is only a track, steep, crooked, and stony, made by the occasional passing of shepherds with their flocks. Sometimes it is plainly seen when it lies upon the bare earth; sometimes it is lost when passing over broad ledges of limestone, or diving down into the bed of rocky valleys. He keeps the hills on the east of Jerusalem between him and the city, and he avoids the villages that lie along the great northern road to Samaria and Galilee. Now and then a shepherd on the rocks calls to the little company of men that he sees passing below, and they return the salutation with the blessing of peace. Here and there they meet a solitary footman hurrying along the narrow track, and as he steps aside to let them pass, they lay the hand on the forehead, the heart, and the lips, and so, in thought, in feeling, and in word, give him also the blessing of peace.

An hour's rapid walk over bleak ridges and across deep ravines brings the Master and his disciples to the site of the ancient city of Nob, where the treacherous and tale-bearing Doeg was skulking about the sanctuary as a spy in the service of the demon-haunted Saul, when David came, hungry and fainting, to Abimelech, the priest, for bread. The disciples have read the story in the books of Samuel, and they divert their minds as they pass the little cluster of stone cabins on the ill-omened hill, by rehearsing the youthful exploits of the

great warrior king, and as they talk with subdued voices they wonder why their Master need hide himself and hesitate to be known and declared at once as great David's greater Son. Jesus thinks rather of the treachery of the Edomite in betraying his innocent benefactors to death, and in the betrayal of Abimelech he sees the foreshadowing of his own. And as the voice of Judas rises loudest in the little company and expresses great eagerness for the speedy coming of the Messiah, Jesus listens and looks sadly, pityingly, upon the traitor, and walks on in silence.

A little farther northward they passed on the left the stony valley where Jonathan shot arrows as if at a mark, and sent out a lad to find them as a sign to David that murder was in the mind of Saul, and the only safety for his friend was to keep out of the king's way. And there the two friends met and kissed one another and wept with heart-breaking sorrow, and then parted for the last time. David went forth to serve for years in the hard school of adversity, as an exile and an outlaw, in preparation for his great career as a conqueror and his high estate as a king. Jonathan went back weeping to the hill of Gibeah, to be the foil of his father's madness and the companion of his father's death.

Just over to the right of their path, hanging on the slope of a hill, overlooking the wilderness of desolation and the sea of death, they passed Anathoth, the home of the prophet of lamentation, who bore the burden of the word of the Lord with weeping and sorrow for forty

years, and whose whole life was a foreshadowing of the mission of the Man of Sorrows. The little town was encompassed with orchards of evergreen olives, and with the bare branches of fig trees, and the black stems of vines lying upon the ground. For the leaves were not yet grown. The view eastward from the housetops of the village extended over naked wind-swept hills, and dark, winding ravines and parched places of the wilderness, where the winter torrents tore up the stony bed of the valleys, and left them all summer bare and blistering in the sun.

The aspect of loneliness and sadness in the whole landscape east of the town was in harmony with the most plaintive of all the prophets, whose spirit poured itself forth in tears and lamentations over the desolations of his country. And here again the great Master, who wept over the impending doom of Jerusalem, finds himself in sympathy with the inspired mourner of ancient time, who sighed for exhaustless fountains of tears, that he might weep day and night for his people. The disciples wondered when they saw a deeper shade of sadness on the face of Jesus as they passed under the hill of Anathoth. They did not know that the Master was calling to mind all the sorrows of the weeping prophet, and making them his own. They did not know that down deep in the heart of Jesus he carried a burden of sympathy, tender and pitiful enough to make the stoutest heart break with weeping.

Pressing on, silent and sad, from the home of the

weeping prophet, Jesus and his disciples make their way down a steep zigzag path into the bed of a bleak valley, heaped everywhere with stones, and thrown into wild confusion by winter torrents. All about them are blasted and terrible hills, faced with gray, glistering ledges of limestone, cloven down to the base with ragged ravines, and standing silent and desolate, for the sun to bleach and the storms to blacken for ages.

And yet here in these wild passes of Benjamin brave men have made their home for a thousand years. Out of these stern, sterile hills, they have extracted such living as makes saints and heroes. They have built up the hill-sides into terraces, and made them hanging-gardens for the fig and the olive and vineyards for the vine. They have made houses of earth and stone, looking so much like the hills out of which they are built, that an unpractised eye sees no sign of a habitation in the distance, where a dozen villages are perched on the high places or nestled in the valleys. The hard, hungry life of the people touches the heart of him who came to lighten all burdens and to give the weary rest. He treads the same path of weariness and toil with the solitary footman whom he meets, hot and hungry, by the way. And he is now upon the last journeys of his mission of pain and sorrow for men, that he may bring the days of better culture and nobler life, when the harvest from a handful of corn on the hills shall wave like Lebanon, and the famished multitudes in the city shall flourish like grass by the fountains.

From the bed of the valley north of Anathoth, the path winds up a steep and rocky ridge, turning to the right and left to find the easiest ascent over slippery ledges and among rolling stones. When Jesus and his disciples gained the summit they had on the left, little more than a stone's throw in the distance, Gibeah of Saul, a bare, conelike hill, looking as if it had been built up by human hands for a stronghold or a watch-tower. And again, the dark memories of the old time came thronging upon the heart and deepening the shadow upon the face of Jesus, as he looked out upon the spot where Saul, the giant-king, sat under the pomegranate tree, with his mighty spear by his side, and the fire of madness in his eye, ready to smite his son with his own hand or to condemn the best man in his kingdom to death, just as the caprice of the moment moved him. And there, in full sight of Jesus as he passed, on the face of the hill, looking toward the ancient place of the tabernacle, in Gibeon, was the spot where seven sons of guilty Saul were crucified in the hill before the Lord in the days of the harvest, as an expiation for their father's sin, and for the deliverance of the people from the three years' famine. And there was the rock on which Rizpah, the broken-hearted mother, spread her sackcloth for a bed and watched the blackening skeletons of her sons all summer long, driving off the vultures that came to feed on the dead by day, and terrifying the screaming jackals with a wilder scream by night.

And the scene of that sevenfold crucifixion on a Pass-

over day a thousand years before would set vividly before the mind of Jesus the awful sacrifice which awaited him at Jerusalem before another harvest came, on the next Passover week, when he himself would be nailed to the cross. And the story of that heroic and heart-broken mother, in the black sackcloth of widowhood, watching by the cross of her sons all summer long, through the midday heat and the midnight cold, was to him a foreshadowing of the hour when he would see his own mother watching by his cross, and he would forget his bitter agony while commending her to the care of his beloved disciple. And that awful sacrifice of the innocent for the guilty in the olden time would be an affecting sign to the pure and spotless Son of God that he must needs bear the sins of many, and make intercession for transgressors, and pour out his soul unto death that the guilty might live. The disciples could not know the thoughts which the hill of Gibeah awakened in the mind of their Master. They could see the expression of deep and strong emotion, which they always looked for in his face when he was greatly moved. But he seemed so much apart from them as he pressed forward, he was so uplifted and carried away by some lofty inspiration, that they did not dare to speak to him.

A little farther on, and still to the left of the by-path which they were pursuing, was the rounded hill of Ramah, where Deborah dwelt under a palm tree in the days of the Judges, and where the children of the captivity were gathered by the cruel conqueror in the days

of Jeremiah, and from whence they set forth upon the long and weary march into the land of exile. And their hearts were so smitten by the great woes that had come upon them that the hills and valleys round about Ramah resounded with weeping, lamentation and great mourning. The vivid fancy of the prophet goes so far as to say that Rachel, who was buried by the roadside at Bethlehem, ten miles off, and a thousand years before, heard the cry of her captive children at Ramah, and sent forth loud lamentations from her tomb in sympathy with their sorrow. And when, six hundred years afterwards, Herod smote all the little children of Bethlehem, in hope thus to destroy the one holy Child, the evangelist says in the same strain of poetic inspiration, that again was heard the voice of the weeping mother, mourning for her murdered children, and refusing to be comforted because they were not.

In passing Ramah, Jesus himself the Man of Sorrows recalls the mourning and the lamentation of a thousand years, and he bears upon his heart the afflictions of the afflicted in all time. The dying mother at Bethlehem who named her child Son of Sorrow, and whose bitter cry the prophet seemed to himself to hear bewailing her captive and murdered children of many generations, was only a symbol of that divinely stricken Mourner from whom all faces should be turned and on whom the sins of all should be laid. The betrayal of Abimelech at Nob, the lamentations of Jeremiah at Anathoth, the sacrifice of the sons of Saul at Gibeah, the mourning

of the captive people at Ramah, the weeping of Rachel from her tomb at Bethlehem, were shadows upon the spirit of Jesus, and signs of his passion, when he was making this last journey with his disciples, and was seeking some secluded spot where he might rest a while and wait for the coming of the hour when he must crown and complete his divine mission by suffering on the cross.

From the ridge east of Gibeah, and from the high places haunted with memories of suffering and sorrow in the old time, Jesus and his disciples make their way down into the bed of a wild ravine which plunges down a dark and winding course through the rocky wilderness to the gorge of the Jordan. At their right, as they cross the valley, are great square mounds of rough stones, looking as if they had been piled up to mark the spot of some great conflict or the burial-place of some mighty host slain in battle. At every step in this last journey the divine Messenger, who came to bring peace to the groaning earth, finds himself surrounded by memories of violence and crime, of misery and death.

From the bed of the valley the little company wind up a long, steep ascent, among jagged rocks, over smooth white ledges and loose rolling stones, till they reach the summit of the hill Geba, and there they shelter themselves from the burning sun in the shade of olive trees outside of the walled town. It is now past noon, and they rest themselves from their journey, while one goes for water to the fountain under the hill, and another

opens the common scrip which contains a little dry bread and a few olives for the midday meal for the whole company.

From their high position they can see northward all the way to the white walls and the high watch-tower of Ephraim, whither they are going, and down the wild, jagged ravines of the wilderness to the plain of Jericho and the Jordan. Southward they can see the towers of Jerusalem and the hills about Zion. Westward is the field of Gibeon and the heights of Bethhoron, where Joshua commanded the sun to stand still in heaven and the moon to stay its course over the valley of Ajalon.

The idlers of Geba come out of the gates, seat themselves in a semicircle on the ground, and stare at the little company under the olive trees. They are all eager to know who the twelve men can be, where they come from, where they are going, and what is the object of their journey. They are withheld from rude questioning and loud talk by something awful and commanding in the look and bearing of One who sits apart from the group, and whose slightest word or gesture the others heed with reverent attention. The villagers see in his face an expression so meek and yet so majestic, so gentle and yet so like a king, that they cannot keep their eyes off from him. Yet they never suspect that in that weary, sorrow-stricken traveller they are looking upon the Lord of earth and heaven. They would not believe it if told that the name of that quiet wayfarer sitting in the olive shade on Geba hill is to be the greatest name among all nations and in all time.

And yet that is the chief lesson for all to learn when studying the walks and homes of Jesus. This weary wayfarer, climbing steep and stony paths, crossing wild and robber-haunted valleys, stealing silently away from Jerusalem to hide himself till his hour shall come, resting now in the olive shade and stared at by the idlers of the town on Geba hill, is the mighty One who makes the winds his chariot and his messengers a flame of fire. And he comes in the form of a servant, and he is found in fashion as the lowliest of the sons of men that he may teach us the greatness of the life that is lived for God, and the sympathy which our Father feels for us in all our toil and sorrow. Jesus takes into his own life whatever is hardest to do and heaviest to bear in our own, that we may learn from him to have God with us in every trial and God helping us in every work.

The hour of noon is soon past, and the Master must needs press on to reach his destination before nightfall in the wilderness. He has now to go down a wilder, steeper, stonier track than any thus far found in the day's journey. He must ascend the opposite bank of the ravine to Michmash, where light-limbed Jonathan and his armor-bearer were obliged to climb upon hands and feet, the ascent is so hard and steep. He must pass over and beyond the jagged cliffs where the garrison of the Philistines so little expected an assault that they were smitten with trembling as if they had seen the dead rise from their graves when they saw Jonathan and his armor-bearer come out of the holes in the rocks and

rush upon them as if ten thousand more were behind them and ready to follow up the attack. Jesus, the bringer of glad tidings, the Messenger of peace to man, must climb these blood-stained mountains, and tread these wild paths of war, that he may stay the violence of human passion and bring the peace of the pitying heavens into weary and contentious hearts.

The way northward from Michmash to Ephraim leads through the same stony world, piled with vast naked boulders, floored with broad ledges of white limestone, littered with millions of loose, rolling pebbles and chipped fragments of crushed rocks, and relieved here and there a little with olive and fig trees rooted in the crevices of rocks or growing fresh and green from a bedding of loose stones. As Jesus and his disciples went on, they were still passing through scenes memorable with the dark history of conflict and blood. About them lay columns and blocks of stone that had been shaped for fortifications or city walls. On the hill-sides were the openings of caverns that had been hiding-places for the defenceless in time of robbery, desolation, and war. Beside their path were pits that had held water and grain for the living, and close by and very much like them in form were rock-hewn tombs for the dead.

They crossed the wild mountain-pass up which the host of Joshua marched from Jericho to the attack upon Ai. They saw the low hollow where the liers in wait were hid behind the town. They passed under the bare, stony hill on which the ancient city stood, and which in

one hour of fire and slaughter was changed to a heap of ruins and left to blacken in the sun and storms for ages. They were moving northward along the same track over which the Assyrian armies came for the destruction of Jerusalem, spreading terror and desolation along the line of their march. To the left of the path pursued by Jesus and his disciples was the stony ridge on which Abraham parted from Lot, the one choosing to wait for the great inheritance of faith, and the other moving toward the fertile plains of the south and pitching his tent every day nearer to Sodom. Just over the ridge, an hour's walk to the left, was the stony hill of Bethel, where Jacob dreamed of heaven and of angels and called the place the house of God, and where Jeroboam, in after time, made a house of idols and set the image of a beast in the place of the living Jehovah.

But now the sun is sinking low behind the mountains of Ephraim, the shadows are lengthening in the valleys, the rock Rimmon is reddening in the evening light, and the little white city to which they are going seems as if it were a blaze of fire set upon a lofty altar among the hills. Soon the dark will come at one swift rush, leaving little space for twilight when once the sun is set, and there will be no entrance to the town for travellers when once the gate is shut. And so Jesus and his disciples hurry along the rough and rocky path, over naked ridges, across deep, jagged ravines, under dark, castellated crags, and at last they climb the sharp, cone-like hill on the top of which the tower and the rock-built town of

Ephraim stands. The Master is glad to enter the gate unobserved, and to find a home in the house of a friend where he can rest from the fatigue of the journey and for a while escape the jealous eyes and the secret plots of the Jews at Jerusalem.

It means much that this mighty and exalted Son of God should make his long and weary journeys from place to place on foot, and that he should travel again and again over the roughest and wildest paths in Palestine, as if the wide earth had not for him a home. No path trodden by man was too steep or hard for him to climb. No summer's heat or winter's cold was too fierce for him to bear. No provision for travellers on the way was too hard to satisfy his wants. A piece of bread from the common scrip of the company, a cup of water from the wayside spring, and his midday meal was made.

And no traveller in life's journey need sink down with weariness and discouragement since the Son of God has made it honorable to go on foot, to climb hard places, and to live on poor fare. No laborer need feel that he is left to toil alone since Jesus has shown by his own example that God's sympathy is with the lowest, and God's help is for all. It is better to walk with Jesus and to be weary in climbing the hill with him than to ride with princes and live on the spoil of the poor.

The great kings of the East rode in chariots. Mountains were levelled and valleys filled up, and rough places were made smooth for them to pass. They had

myriads of armed men to go before them, and to march in their train wherever they went. They oppressed and spoiled the poor, the feeble, and the defenceless. To them it was a sufficient reason for robbing and enslaving any people that they had the power to do it. To them human life was cheap, not to be regarded for a moment if it stood in the way of some momentary indulgence to the monarch's appetite or passion. Their hearts were not touched by the misery of the wretched or the poverty of the poor. They built monuments for the commemoration of their guilty conquests out of the blood and agonies of millions.

Jesus, the true and everlasting King, appears as the Friend of the poor and needy. He redeems the helpless from deceit and violence, and their blood is precious in his sight. He proves himself to be the King for whose coming the nations have groaned and waited long. He goes down himself to the lowest depths of human want and misery that he may raise up a new and mighty manhood, and make common people princes unto God, higher and mightier than all princes whose names are written only in the earth. This most glorious work was Jesus doing when men looked on him as a homeless wanderer, resting at noonday in the olive shade beside the public fountain, or seeking a lodging with some hospitable citizen for the night.

The great monarchs of the East made their home in palaces. They were clothed in purple and fine linen, and they fared sumptuously every day. They hedged

themselves around with guards to prevent the approach of petitioners, and they veiled themselves from common eyes with awfulness and mystery. Whenever they came forth from their seclusion it was their study to strike their people with awe and trembling. They are represented on their monuments in the act of treading on the necks of princes, putting out the eyes of captive kings, consigning whole nations to bondage. The record of their reign is a record of intrigue and treachery in the palace, of war and plunder in the field, and of oppression and misery among the people.

Jesus, the greatest of conquerors, the wisest and best of kings, never had a house of his own. His life was all open to the day, and he lived among fishermen and field laborers as one of them. He never rode but once, and then only a half mile or so, and not for rest, but for a sign unto the people. He rules with a sceptre of righteousness and peace, his one supreme law is love, and his empire is the hearts of millions. Subjection to him is the highest liberty. It is better to hold the humblest place under him than to wear the crown of conquered nations and have no higher honor.

This same Jesus, who climbed the steep paths of Palestine with weary feet, now walks in white amid the golden lamps of heaven and beside the crystal sea. When the beloved disciple, who followed the steps of his Master on the stony hills, saw the same person in heavenly vision, it seemed to him that the eyes of Jesus were as a flame of fire, and his face like the sun shining

in its strength, and in his right hand were the stars, and his voice was as the sound of many waters. And for the terror of that sight John fell at the feet of Jesus as dead. But the disciple was still clothed with flesh and blood. He was still compassed about with the infirmities which Jesus bore as the Man of Sorrows. When the time comes for the ransomed of earth to be clothed with immortality, they shall be made so like Jesus in glory that he shall seem to be one of them. The disciples shall be even more familiar with their Master when they see the crown of heaven upon his head, and the stars of heaven in his hand, than they were when they followed him over the hills of the morning or they sat with him weary and faint in the olive shade for the noonday rest.

Jesus comes to glorify our humanity, to lift burdened and weary men up to an estate so high and blessed that we dare not now believe in its reality. He treads our paths, puts forth his hands to our work, subjects himself to our necessities, makes himself one with us in all our exposure to trial and temptation. He passes from that low estate through the darkness of the grave into the kingdom of light. There he shows himself to the beloved disciple in heavenly vision, that human eyes may see the glory and human speech may report back to earth the greatness and the splendor of the high estate prepared for all who follow Jesus on the lowly paths of earth. The humblest toiler in the field, the workshop or the highway, is animated to patience and hope by the

assurance that his lot is no harder than the one voluntarily chosen for our sake by the Son of God. He has only to endure unto the end, and he, too, shall follow Jesus through darkness into light. He shall rise from dishonor into glory. He shall be made equal with the princes and powers of the heavenly kingdom. He shall be clothed with a glory upon the brightness of which he could not nôw look without fear and trembling.

The Last Journey.

It came to pass, when the time was come that he should be received up, he steadfastly set his face to go to Jerusalem.—LUKE ix. 51.

THE VALLEY OF THE JORDAN.

XVIII.

THE LAST JOURNEY.

JESUS spent forty days and forty nights, fasting and alone, in the wilderness of Judea in preparation for his great work of preaching the gospel. In the solitudes and waste places of the earth he sought to be alone with his Father, not that he might shun the toil and strife, the weariness and the sorrow of our human lot, but that he might gird himself with strength and constancy for the conflict that awaited him. He separated himself from men, he withdrew for a while from the world's continual battle, that he might come forth from his solitude with a deeper sympathy for all whose enlistment is for life, and who must march in the ranks and fight in the field till they fall.

Now, having finished his public ministry in Galilee, having crowned all his mighty works by raising the dead in Judea, Jesus retires from the field in preparation for the final sacrifice which awaits him at Jerusalem. The great work of public teaching is done. Whatever more he shall say, will be only to meet the demands of each hour as he goes on his way to the cross. But now the weary Master must needs have another season of retirement and repose before going forth to the final work of suffering and death. He will spend another forty days and forty nights in the country near to the

same wilderness into which he went up from his baptism in Jordan.

He does not go now, as at first, to be with the wild beasts, and to spend the days and nights fasting and alone, with no bed but the bare earth, and no shelter but the dens and caves of the mountains. His disciples have now become one with himself in his sorrows and temptations, and he must have them with him wherever he goes. And he must take this last season of retirement to unfold to them the mysteries and glories of the heavenly kingdom more clearly than he could do with the ignorant multitude around him to applaud, and the cunning scribes to catch and pervert his words.

He chooses for his retirement the little city of Ephraim, which stands on the top of a cone-like hill between the green country on the west and the stony wilderness on the east. It appears in the distance more like a watch-tower than a town. From the housetops within the walls one can trace the course pursued by pilgrims from the north in going up to the great feasts at Jerusalem, whether they take the Samaria road by Bethel, or the Jordan road by Jericho. It stands high up on a ridge half-way between the two great lines of travel north and south, and between the two grand features of the country, cultivated ground and barren wilderness.

From this hiding place the divine Fugitive can pass, if need be, at a moment's warning into the deeper recesses of the mountains and take refuge, as in the days of his temptation, with the beasts in the dens and caves of the

earth. From this lonely, rock-built town, he can go out as he was wont to do in Galilee, and spend the whole night alone with his Father in the solitudes and waste places of the wilderness. He can take his disciples with him and withdraw to the quiet valleys, or rest all day in the olive shade on the hill-sides, and talk with them about the heavenly kingdom, free from the stare of the crowd and the cry of the wretched and miserable. He can pass along the narrow street without interruption from the multitude pressing upon him behind and before and contending with each other to come near him. He can sit in the house of a hospitable friend, and rest at night without hearing the shouts and the tumult of people in the street, striving to press in at the door or to go up on the outside stairway and let down their sick through the tiling before him.

In this retired city of Ephraim, hidden away among the hills, Jesus remained full forty days and forty nights, waiting for the time of the Passover, when he would join the great multitude of the pilgrims at Jericho, go up with them to Jerusalem, and offer himself in the foreappointed and final sacrifice. We are not told how he spent this time of sacred retreat from the world any more than we are told how he spent thirty years of his life in the secluded vale of Nazareth. But we may be sure that all the while he was preparing himself for the dread conflict that awaited him at Jerusalem, and also preparing his disciples for their great mission of witnessing for him unto the nations. We can imagine him day

by day drawing them closer and closer to himself, opening his heart more fully to them, and storing their memories with words and thoughts which they would recall, and in which they would find a deeper meaning when he was taken from them. He reconciles their differences, reproves their pride, humbles their worldly ambition, tells them over and over again, as he had told them many times already, and they believed him not, that his kingdom is not of this world. They are not to look for place, or honor, or power as his servants, they are not to command the riches, or the armies, or the thrones of the nations. Their lot on the earth must be one of toil, and poverty and affliction, and they are to rejoice only that their names are written in heaven.

It must have taken long time, and great patience, and many repetitions to teach that lesson to twelve full-grown, passionate, ambitious, undisciplined men, who had been drawn to Jesus by the expectation of being made princes and nobles of a glorious kingdom on the earth. Forty days of especial schooling under the divine Teacher, apart from the noise and excitement of the multitude, were none too many for these strong-willed men to learn to submit themselves wholly to the gentler yet stronger will of their Master. For so long a time they must be kept continually under the guidance of his eye, and within hearing of his voice, to learn that the glory and the joy of life is to live like him who went about doing good, and that the highest and mightiest kingdom, even in this world, is love. Six times over

must the weeks and Sabbaths come and go with them in this sacred retreat, that they may be prepared to go forth with Jesus upon the great seventh week of the divine Passion and to hold on in faith through the dark day of death and the two nights of burial until the light of the resurrection morning brings hope to a despairing world.

And now the time is at hand. The Master must go forth with his disciples upon his last journey to Jerusalem. He goes not to heal or to preach, but to suffer and die. He has spoken the word which the world has been waiting for ages to hear, and it now only remains for him to confirm the authority and seal the message of mercy with his sacrificial blood. And yet soon as he leaves his retreat and comes out into the paths of men, he must speak to the people and help the afflicted all the way.

Refreshed and strengthened by the last repose he will ever have on earth until he rests in the tomb, he directs his steps northward, that he may just pass over the borders of Galilee, and then go down to join the pilgrims as they descend the valley of the Jordan on the way to Jericho and Jerusalem.

The morning is bright on the hills as he goes down the stony steep from Ephraim. The grass and grain are green in the valleys. The sower is still scattering seed, the ploughman is following the ox in the furrow, the vintager is looking for buds on the vines, the shepherd is watching the sheep and the goats as they climb

the rocks. The disciples have been so long shut up in the little city that they are glad to be again on the road. They are eager again to see the multitude gather in the highways to hail their coming, and follow on from city to city in the steps of their Master. He goes to his death. And yet after all that he has told his disciples to the contrary, they whisper among themselves that now at last he goes to his crowning. Their old ambitions and worldly aspirations all come back again, now that they are once more upon the highway. They are only a little checked by the awful tenderness and solemnity which they see in the face of Jesus.

They have not far to go in their first day's walk before they hear the old familiar cry, which they have heard so many times from the parched lips of the afflicted among the hills of Galilee—Jesus, Master, have mercy on us. This time it comes from men whose life is a living death, whose bodies are devoured with disease, and whose minds are maddened with misery. At the gate of the village which Jesus is approaching are ten wretched creatures whose tale of woe is sadder than any human tongue can tell, for they are lepers. Covered with rags and crouching in dust and ashes, they sit all day by the wayside, and beg for food enough to be thrown at them to lengthen out the span of a loathsome life. No kindness of the compassionate, and no skill of the physician can arrest or heal the plague which has sealed up all the fountains of joy and hushed all the voices of music for them. The cruel scourge has built up a wall

of separation between them and their fellow-men as high as heaven. Every house is shut against them, every hand is withdrawn from their touch. They may not sit under the same tree, nor drink from the same fountain, nor walk in the same path, nor enter the same sanctuary with other men. It is a part of their doom that they must lift up the confession of their pollution with a continual cry, that no foot may approach, and no hand may touch them. All the afflictions of the maimed, paralyzed and withered are concentrated in the one plague which has poisoned the fountain of their life, and made every limb in their bodies and every feature in their face hideous with deformity.

These poor, abandoned creatures, looking out from bleared, half-blinded eyes, see far down the road that leads to the gate the little company of Jesus and his disciples coming. They see peasants leaving the plough in the field, shepherds forsaking their flocks on the hills, and vintagers running down to the road from the vineyards to be near when the little company shall pass. They see many coming out of the village and gathering about the gate, and they hear eager and excited voices saying, It is Jesus, the Prophet of Nazareth. He has been hidden for a while from the world. But now he is out again upon his old walks among the people, and everybody is going after him. With hoarse and husky voices that are scarcely human, the ten lepers join the cry, and repeat the prayer which so many times has brought health to the sick and life to the dead: Jesus, Master, have mercy on us.

There was a time when Jesus answered that cry from the lips of the leper by coming close and laying his hand upon the polluted flesh to show that his touch could make the foulest clean. There was a time when he put the suppliant off with seeming delay, and prolonged the act of healing that men might see his work better, and be more sure of his power to save. But now that his great work of teaching is done and he goes on his way to the cross, it is enough that he speaks the word of power, and sends the healed and happy suppliant home in peace.

So he bids the lepers go and show themselves unto the priests, as if the plague were already healed, and they only need the testimony of the public inspector to remove the ban of exclusion from society, and to restore them to friends and home. They turn to go, and with the first step of obedience to the word of Jesus, they feel the pulse of a new life in every limb. The blinding film melts from their bleared eyes. The tone of better days comes back to their voice. Their stiffened joints move with the spring and elasticity of youth. They look with surprise upon their fingerless hands, and find them sound and whole. They no longer go tottering upon toeless feet, but walk erect and firm, like soldiers in the ranks. They stare at each other with wonder and joy, for each sees the other's face round and full as it was when the first appearance of the plague spot smote their friends with terror and broke their own hearts.

And now surely these ten men will turn to their Benefactor and make the air ring with shouts of gratitude and joy louder than was their imploring cry for help when they first saw Jesus coming in the way. Now surely they will break through the gathering crowd with frantic haste and fling themselves at Jesus' feet with tears of thankfulness for the new life which his word has given. Now they will follow him and sound his praise and call upon all the afflicted to seek his help wherever he goes.

But no, it is only one in ten of all that were healed that has any thanks to give. The nine slink away and hide themselves in the side streets and let their Benefactor pass without giving him a word or a look of gratitude, or letting the people know who it was that made them whole. They have been lifted from the lowest depths of despair and misery by the word of Jesus, he has set their feet upon firm ground, and made the world all new and beautiful for them to see and enjoy, and they steal away in silence from their Deliverer, and never so much as turn to give him a word of thanks.

Alas! that such ingratitude should ever dwell in human hearts, that such cruel wrong should be done to the world's greatest Friend. The best light that cheers our homes shines from the face of Jesus. The best word for the dark hours of pain and sorrow comes from the lips of Jesus. The best hope to comfort the afflicted and to sustain the dying is given by Jesus. The best

helps and encouragements to a brave, strong, and rejoicing life are found in the teachings and example of Jesus. The best lessons in all history are learned while following the steps of Jesus. The best study for the clear mind and the pure heart, the best rules for the improvement of society, the best law for the government of nations, the best remedy for all the wrong and misery in the world, we learn from the life and words of Jesus. We cannot go out or come in, we cannot toil or rest, we cannot live or breathe or have our being without receiving the chief blessing of life from that word of power which Jesus spoke in behalf of the afflicted in old time, and which he still speaks for all. And surely none should go on, day by day, in full enjoyment of ten thousand blessings from the world's greatest Benefactor without turning to give him thanks, without acknowledging the best and surest Friend.

Jesus himself could not refrain from an exclamation of surprise at the strange ingratitude of the nine who turned not back to give glory to God, when they found themselves saved from a living and loathsome death. That dark and dreadful sin of unthankfulness, the fruitful source of all other sins and sorrows in the world, cast a new and deeper shade upon his spirit as he passed on through the town and went to another village. Grief for the ingratitude of the nine gave a tone of more touching pity and tenderness to words of blessing which Jesus spoke for the grateful Samaritan weeping for joy at his feet—Arise, go where thou wilt, thy faith hath made both soul and body free.

As he passes on, traversing the border-land between Samaria and Galilee, some of his old enemies, the Pharisees, mix with the gathering multitude and strive to stir up the minds of the people against him. They go about from one to another in the crowd with deceit upon their tongues and the poison of asps under their lips. They try by every possible misrepresentation to expose the whole work and character of Jesus to ridicule and contempt. Sometimes they draw near and try to entangle and irritate him with provoking questions and with mock reverence for his wisdom as a teacher. It is so long since he began his public career and announced himself as the Messiah, he has said so much about the speedy coming of the kingdom of God, and he has done so little to satisfy the popular demand for a great king and conqueror to crush the heathen and deliver Israel, that they think it will be a very sharp and cutting question to ask him when the kingdom of God will come.

Jesus replies with his wonted patience and serenity of spirit, although he well knows that the question is asked with no desire to learn and with no willingness to accept a truthful answer. He tells them that the kingdom, which they are looking for from afar, has already come and they see it not. A movement mightier than the march of armies is going on, a throne more exalted and enduring than the Cæsars' is set up, a new and more glorious era for the world has begun in their day and under their very eyes and they see it not. That king-

dom comes not with outward show. It has its seat in the heart. Its Sovereign shall be crowned with thorns and crucified. Its princes shall share with him in the contempt of earth and the crown of heaven.

To his disciples he turns sadly to say that by and by when this time of waiting and of quiet preparation is past, they will sigh for its return and see it not. And then false Christs will come and will say, the long-sought kingdom of God is just about to appear. Many will run to and fro in search of satisfying good, and some will say it is found. But his disciples must not heed such cries. They need not join the search in city or desert. The eternal Christ is ever near. The Son of man is revealed like the lightning's flash in the secret place of the soul, wherever the sense of sin reveals the need of pardon, wherever the longing of the soul goes out for a higher and a better life, wherever the conscience asserts the supremacy of duty, and the heart yearns for the drawing of infinite love, there is the coming of the Son of man, and there his throne of final judgment is set. The deluge of waters in the days of Noah, the rain of fire from heaven upon Sodom, the silent coming of death to take one and leave another in the same house, are only signs of the eternal judgment with which the Son of man is ever judging the quick and the dead. For that high judgment let them stand ready, and they need not heed the judgments of man.

At such words of warning the disciples are ready to say, who, then, can be saved? Who can stand in that

fearful judgment which tries the secret things of the heart? What can it avail to cry for mercy when justice sits enthroned in the secret place of the soul?

To calm that fear Jesus turns to his favorite mode of teaching by parable. He casts the great truths of the heavenly kingdom into earthly forms, that his disciples may grasp their meaning better. Every little city, which they see set on the hills as they walk, has a seat of justice in the gate. The judge sits there morning and evening to hear the complaints of all that come. If he be unjust, the people mourn, truth falls in the street, and equity cannot enter. In one of these cities in sight, there was such a judge, who feared not God, neither regarded man. And yet even he heard the cry of the widow and delivered her from the wicked, because she came unto him continually. And much more shall God hear the cry of his own children that goeth up unto him day and night for themselves and for the whole round world. In answer to that prayer which rises without ceasing, a thousand years the same, God will visit the nations in the vengeance of mercy and the justice of love. And wherever the Son of man in his continual coming finds faith on the earth, there shall the cry of God's children be heard, and there shall the penitent and believing be saved.

While the Master so speaks the Pharisees in the company toss their heads in scorn of words fit only for publicans and sinners to hear. They claim the highest purity. Their very name signifies separation from the

mass of men. They pay tithes and give alms. They pray loud and fast long. They wear holy words on their foreheads and sacred fringes on their garments. They wash the defilement of the market from their hands when they come in from the street, and they sit in the high places of the synagogue to be seen of men. And surely such righteous men need not regard words spoken only for people that know not the law, neither the traditions of the elders. So think the Pharisees, who follow in the train of Jesus only to take up some evil report against him and carry it to those who are seeking his life.

And on them the Master turns his calm and awful rebuke in words that have been pictured to the eye and sung to the heart for millions. The Pharisee, standing in the most public place of the holy house, praying loud with head erect and heart lifted up with pride, boasting of his goodness to God and burning with hatred to man, confessing no fault and asking no pardon, and in the farthest corner of the same house the poor publican, bowed down with penitence and beating his breast in sorrow for sin,—there they stand for all time a living lesson, plainer than words could teach, upon the pride that debases and the humility that exalts, there they stand in the temple for the eyes of the world to see, the proud Pharisee abased and the humble publican exalted.

And just as Jesus held up this picture, as if to confirm his words with a more tender and touching appeal

to all hearts, mothers come with their infants in their arms, begging his blessing upon their speechless babes. The officious disciples forbade them, as if it were giving the good Master a needless trouble. But Jesus broke forth in the blessed words which have filled the hearts of millions with unutterable gratitude and love—Suffer little children to come unto me and forbid them not, for of such is the kingdom of God. That divine call to the little ones has ever been the world's great hope and the bereaved parent's great consolation. It comes still like a voice from heaven to the broken-hearted as they bend over the snowy shroud of a little child, and their tears fall fast as the rain-drops upon the cold brow that must soon be covered with the dust of the grave. Remembering those words of Jesus, they have had faith to look up through the cloud of grief and behold the great Shepherd walking in light upon the hills of heaven, and carrying the lost lamb of the earthly fold tenderly in his bosom.

The mention of the kingdom of heaven calls forth the question from a rich young man what he shall do to inherit eternal life. He is pure and blameless in private life, and he fulfils all righteousness before God. He speaks truth and does justice and deals honorably with his fellow-men. He helps the poor and defends the fatherless and honors the hoary head. He exacts only that which is his own, and he takes up no reproach against his neighbor. It would be in vain to attempt to convince him that he has not kept all the commandments

from his youth up. So Jesus puts another test which touches the secret springs of the heart. Will he forsake all to follow Christ? Will he consent to be as poor as his Master, and seek his joy in doing good to others? Will he use all his earthly riches and spend all of his earthly life in laying up treasure in heaven and becoming rich towards God?

The young man went away sorrowful, for he was very rich, and it was his money that made him sad. And that is all that many get out of riches—sadness and sorrow. Money should make the rich thankful and the poor sing for joy. Money should open fountains of beneficence and send out streams of life and blessing into all the waste places of the earth. Money should bring happy days to rich and poor, and bind the two together in bonds of gratitude and affection. Money should make the years of life beautiful, and the day of death blessed, and the kingdom of heaven easy to enter and rich to enjoy. And it is not strange that one who is very rich should be very sorrowful if his money only brings care and anxiety and trouble. It were better to be poor with a cheerful mind and thankful heart, than to have all the wealth in the world and make nothing out of it but the pains of getting and the care of keeping and the fear of losing. The best of all that life has to give shall be his who gives up all to God, and looks for true riches in the life everlasting.

So Jesus speaks by the way as he passes on from village to village between Samaria and Galilee. In the

ALMOST PERSUADED.

meantime he sees his disciples beginning again to be excited and carried away by the numbers and the enthusiasm of the gathering multitude. He hears them talking again in whispers about the offices and honors and riches which they are to divide among themselves when he shall set up his kingdom and make them all princes. After all his instructions to the contrary during the six weeks' retirement at Ephraim, they are still possessed with the expectation of earthly grandeur to be attained by them speedily under their Master. He draws them closer to himself and tells them, with the earnestness of sorrow and the tenderness of pity, that mockery and torture and death await him at Jerusalem. But they believe him not. They take to themselves the credit of sagacity and courage and foresight, and they attribute the sad words of Jesus to a feeling of discouragement and sorrow that sometimes would weigh him down and make him speak as if some dreadful calamity awaited him. They did not know the things that were spoken.

After brief excursions in the border-land between Samaria and Galilee, Jesus and his disciples turned toward the valley of the Jordan, to join the pilgrims from the north on their way to Jerusalem. Their walk was now for a while through a waste, great and horrible, like the valley of the shadow of death. Wild, waterless ravines went plunging down through wild, naked hills. The bed of the ravines in which they walked was strewn with loose, rolling stones, as if it had been swept by furious torrents

in spring-time, and left bare and bleaching in the sun all the rest of the year. Sometimes their footway hung on the edge of a precipice, with a deep abyss below, ready to swallow them up, and loose, crumbling crags threatening to fall and crush them from above. Sometimes they came out upon the rounded shoulder of a bare limestone hill, and far down the way they were going they could see through the sulphurous air the leaden waters of the sea of death. Sometimes the wind sounded so piteously that it seemed as if it were the wail of outcast spirits, doomed to wander in the waste places of the wilderness, and find no rest. There was no house, no cultivated field, no sound of busy life to cheer them on their way.

The company from the villages fell off, and few were left with the Master and his disciples when they came down to the green vale of the Jordan. But now all was changed. The wheat that was half-grown on the hills was ripe and ready for the reaper in the valley. The vine and the fig had put forth their dark green leaves, and the silvery olive wore its summer hue. The Syrian spring, that still lingered on the highlands of Gilead and Galilee, was made glorious summer on the banks of the sacred river. Pilgrims were crowding the dusty road, and the whole population seemed to be moving on towards Jerusalem. The greatest of all the Jewish feasts was just at hand, and the tribes of Israel, that were scattered abroad among the nations, were coming back to revive their patriotism and to fulfil their vows in the Holy City.

Jesus and his disciples join the multitude, and the whole valley resounds with the song that the pilgrims sing—"Our feet shall stand within thy gates, O Jerusalem." When the rumor runs along the line that Jesus, the Prophet of Nazareth, is among the pilgrims, those before slacken their pace and wait for him to come up, and those behind quicken their steps to overtake him, and soon all about him, in the travelled path and in the open fields, a dense crowd move on, shouting and singing as if celebrating some great victory. The hearts of all are lifted up with high expectation. The impression grows stronger and more general that Jesus has now at last come out of his retirement to commit himself publicly as the Messiah, and to restore the kingdom to Israel. Now at last the day that prophets waited for is at hand, and the redemption of the chosen people draweth nigh. When Jesus shall stand on Mount Olivet, the multitude will shout hosanna, and Jerusalem will receive her King.

In the meantime the day wears on. The evening shadows are lengthening on the plain of the Jordan between the mountains of Moab and the wilderness of Judea. Jericho is just at hand. There the great host will rest until the early hours of the morning, and then set forth upon the long ascent up the steep and stony road to Jerusalem. The city of palms is already crowded. Thousands will sleep outside the gates, with no covering but the open heavens, and no bed but the bare ground. The rumor has gone on before that Jesus

is in the company coming down from the north, and a great multitude rush out to meet him. Thousands that have heard the fame of his mighty works are eager to see his face and hear his voice. They will count it a great event in their lives if for one moment they can look upon one who had power to hush the storm and raise the dead. They will count it a thing to tell of to their dying day if they can see him touch the eyes of the blind and give them sight, or speak to the deaf and make them hear.

The crowd fills the highway and the fields. There is shouting and pushing and trampling of feet. The strong thrust aside the weak. Parents lift up their children to give them a look over the heads of the swaying crowd. The rich and the rulers of the city have no better chance than the rabble. Some run on before and climb trees and high rocks by the roadside, and wait for the procession to come. The blind, the lame, and the palsied implore others to help them to a position where they can attract the attention of Jesus as he passes. And all the while the one calm, pitying, sorrow-stricken traveller, whose name is on every lip, moves steadily forward as the multitude give way before and close up behind.

Among the quickest and most eager of the crowd was one whose name will live as long as the gospel of Jesus speaks to the world. And yet ten verses of the sacred record tell us all that we know about him. At first glance we would not say that his was a very promising

character or a very attractive person. His stature was as short as his story. He lived in a city that his fathers cursed. He held an office that everybody hated. He got his wealth by taxes which in his time and country was only another name for tyranny. He was so small in person that men thought it severe to say that his soul was no bigger than his body.

This man was Zacchæus the publican. His brief biography in ten verses has touched more hearts than some that are written in ten volumes. He was looked upon as a sinner above all others that dwelt in Jericho. There were many who thought it patriotism to curse his name, and piety to shun his company. And yet this little man has left a better memory than many who despised him. He so promptly improved his first opportunity to see Jesus that he shook off the odium of an infamous name and secured the distinction of an especial blessing from the Son of God.

The beginning of a better life in Zacchæus was an intense and irrepressible curiosity to see Jesus. He would know something more than hearsay about the Teacher who was stirring the hearts of men with the strange power of his words, and filling the land with the fame of his mighty works. He would learn the secret of his power to calm the passionate and comfort the afflicted and awe the proud and threatening. He would see for himself what there was in the person or manner or speech of Jesus to draw the world after him and make many even willing to die for him.

And so this busy man of Jericho lost no time in delay when once he had resolved what to do. He ran on before the crowd and climbed up into a tree whose branches overhung the road, and then having done the best he could to secure a favorable position, he waited for Jesus to pass. If he had kept upon the common highway, he would have been swept along by the multitude, and it would have been as much as he could do to keep from being trodden under foot. If he would see Jesus, he must climb. If he would gratify a just and laudable curiosity, he must decide quick and act promptly, and commit himself openly and risk the criticism of the respectable and the ridicule of the vulgar.

He never thought of such a thing as teaching others by his example. And yet his conduct says louder than many words: If you would see Jesus, decide, put forth effort, climb. To get purer air and a wider view, go up higher. Lift yourself up to a stronger, healthier, happier life. Let not the multitude carry you along in the heedless and headlong rush for the blind and beastly pleasures of appetite and passion. Do not be led by the voices that promise ease and applaud success and decry self-denial. The healthiest and happiest life is his who is ever lifting himself above all selfishness and impurity into the heavenly air of truth and goodness and love. The freest hand and the firmest step are his who is ever reaching out to take hold on the Hand Almighty, and who is ever asking that Hand to take hold on his.

We are all curious to know what we can about men

who sit on thrones, men who command armies, men who stir the hearts of millions with their words. How much more eager should we be to know most about him who controls all the crowns and armies of the earth, and who sets up the throne of his power in the human soul. How intense and sacred should be our curiosity to know him whose name is highest and mightiest in earth and heaven, and who subdues and reigns only in the right of love. Take that one name out of the world's history, and there would be nothing left to satisfy the first and deepest question of every earnest and truth-seeking mind. There would be no teacher to tell what lies hidden under the awful mystery of death, no divine messenger from the unseen world to show us that through the door of darkness is the way into the light. Surely it is the highest reason to manifest an intense curiosity to see a Teacher who can tell us all that.

This noted publican of Jericho mingled caution with curiosity. He was a practical man of the world. He never could have been a successful collector of taxes under appointment from a foreign power if he had not been accustomed to do business under difficulties. He was not easily thwarted in his purpose or turned back by opposition. He was not a man to be put down by ridicule. When he set his heart upon having anything, it only made him want it the more that some said he could not get it. It only made him more energetic in effort when others said there was no use in trying. He knew very well that things got without effort are least

worth having. And so his desire to see Jesus grew stronger the more difficulty he found in the way of gratifying it. And yet he would have said in the end that the hindrances in the way of coming to Christ are all helps to him who meets them with prompt action and determined will. It was because he was little of stature and in danger of being trodden under foot by the multitude that he was compelled to climb and make for himself an opportunity to see Jesus. The necessity for prompt action helped him to choose, and the quickest decision was the best.

A good purpose fades and gives up its life like a delicate flower while you keep it in hand and hold it back from execution. Promptness in right doing is not the haste of passion nor the hurry that leaves good work half-done. Promptness in duty is only doing first the thing that needs first to be done. Whoever does that will have time enough for everything, and will never need to be in a hurry. If you would be calm and self-possessed amid all the haste and agitation of the world, you must be quick to answer when duty calls. If you would not run yourself out of breath and run in vain, you must start at the word.

This little man of Jericho had some official dignity to care for. The authority of the great, world-conquering Roman Empire was represented in him. And it was the more necessary for him to guard the respectability of his office because nobody liked it, and because he was so small in person that people measured the authority

of the law by the littleness of the man. He knew that the grumbling tax-payers of Jericho would like nothing better than to see their little persecutor perched in a tree over the road for all the wits and worldlings of the town to shoot at with the shafts of ridicule as they passed.

And yet Zacchæus was so much in earnest that he cared little for the mockery of the crowd. He did not worry himself much about what the world would say of his conduct, so long as he was sure of seeing Jesus. It is better to be ridiculed and be right than have the applause of millions and be wrong. And earnestness in doing right is after all most likely to command respect. If it is ever laughed at by the heartless and the wicked, it is only the worse for the fools that laugh.

When Jesus came to the place and looked up, he called Zacchæus by name. He knew very well how everybody likes to be called by name. If you meet a man in the street and say—Good-morning, your salutation means twice as much to him if you call his name. The more promptly and heartily you call his name, the better he likes it, and the happier he is to see you. When God in ancient time would give his people the strongest assurance of his personal care, he said—"I have called thee by thy name."

So when the publican heard his name called by Jesus his heart was won. "What," said he, within himself, "does this mighty Prophet of Nazareth know me? Am I named and called by this holy personage after whom

all the world wonders? Does he speak to me before all this multitude as if I were an old friend, and my house were his home?"

So thought the man whom all the rabble ridiculed and whom the ruder ones were ready to pelt with stones. And no sooner thought than done. He came down at the word of Jesus. He came down with greater eagerness than he went up. It was curiosity that made him climb. It was the call of Christ that made him descend.

It were well if every call of Christ were answered as promptly and gladly. He comes to all with the gifts of love in his hands, and the words of peace upon his lips. He comes to the rich to give a new value to their wealth, and he comes to the poor to make their poverty their greatest blessing. He comes to the young in the bloom and beauty of their life's green spring, and he offers to give the hope and gladness of youth for companions all the way to the end of life's journey. He comes to the aged to support their feeble steps as they go down the hill, and to clothe the clouds of evening with the golden hues of a morning that shall break in everlasting day. He comes to the busy, the healthful and the strong, to set them tasks worthy of their strength, and to give them work which shall bring an infinite reward. He comes to the afflicted, the suffering and the dying, to heal the broken heart, to give patience that can conquer pain, to give hope that can conquer death. Surely such a Friend should be received joyfully.

The house of Zacchæus was not small, nor was its

owner poor. But neither had ever been so blest as they were when Jesus was received joyfully within the doors. There had been grand company and high feasting in the publican's mansion many a time before that day. But the deepest, truest joy came when Jesus was received as a guest. The happy man who had been made glad by receiving the Friend of sinners to his house stood up before all the company of guests and spectators and called him Lord. He was not ashamed to say what cautious priests and cavilling scribes were most unwilling to hear, that the Prophet of Nazareth was the Christ of God. His heart had been so deeply moved by the coming of Christ to his house that he longed to testify his gratitude by deeds of justice and mercy. So he promised before many witnesses to make fourfold restitution in case he had done any man wrong, and the half of his great wealth he gave to the poor whom Jesus loved.

So much does it enlarge the heart of a hard, gain-seeking man when the love of the world goes out and the love of Christ comes in. Justice must go before generosity, and both follow triumphant and rejoicing in the train of love. Salvation comes to the house when the love of Christ comes to the heart. The true value of wealth is first found when the owner learns to use it for God. The misdeeds of the past become messengers of peace when they lead the penitent along the path of confession and restitution. The work and joy of life begin anew, with the hopefulness of youth and

the freshness of the morning, when the heart receives him who went to be guest with a man that was a sinner.

Of all places in the world, home is the one to receive Jesus joyfully. He takes the little ones in his arms and blesses them. The freshest gladness comes to their young hearts when they learn to sing hosannas to his name. He joins in the joyful festivities of the family, and they are never so happy as when they have Jesus for a guest. He soothes the fretful, the impatient and the murmuring with his gentle and loving spirit. He looks in tenderness upon the weary and the discouraged and the overtasked, and they carry their burdens lightly when his sympathy touches their hearts. Rough manners become gentle, and harsh voices have music, and grating discords blend into harmony, and sad looks brighten like the morning when all the family feel that Jesus is in the midst. He does not leave the house when the dark hours of mourning and calamity come. When one of the household is stricken down by disease, and the sad company of the living look upon the still, cold face over which the shadow of death has passed, Jesus is still there, to say as he said to the sorrowing in Bethany —"I am the resurrection and the life."

This divine Guest, whose coming made such gladness in the house at Jericho, stands at every door and knocks. He says many times over to all within—"Open unto me." There he is willing to stand till his locks are wet with the dews of the night, waiting for a welcome.

CHRIST BLESSING LITTLE CHILDREN.

Surely such a Guest has a right to expect that the keeper of every house will rise up and open the door and receive him joyfully. And the great house of the world will be made glad, and earth will be like heaven, when Jesus is so received in all the homes of men.

Pilgrims to the Passover.

As they departed from Jericho, a great multitude followed him.—MATT. xx. 29.

XIX.

PILGRIMS TO THE PASSOVER.

THE night is past in the plain of the Jordan, and the brief twilight of Eastern climes is shooting up over the mountains of Moab. A thin, silvery haze, stretching away northward, shows the winding course of the sacred river, and a still lighter veil hangs in the south over the silent waters of the sea of death. The stars go out quickly, one by one, the forms of the distant landscape come into view, and the dark shadows that hang around the stony heights of Gilead and Ephraim melt into day. The hours of the morning will fly apace and the air in this deep basin, a thousand feet beneath the sea, will seem like the blast of a furnace before noon.

The city of Jericho and the grounds around the gates have been all alive for an hour with tumultuous voices and trampling feet and hurrying to and fro. Children are crying after their parents and protectors, servants are running at the call of their masters, distant companies are shouting to each other, camels are groaning under their burdens, the flocks intended for sacrifice fill the air with bleating. This is the main division of the mighty host of two millions and more that will gather at Jerusalem for the great feast, and the sound is as if an army of a hundred thousand men were breaking camp

and setting forth upon the march. Already the long train of pilgrims can be seen in the growing light winding up the steep and stony road towards the Holy City, and many more are falling into line and following the steps of those who have been an hour on the way. The gates of the city have been opened before sunrise to relieve the crowded streets and to give the pilgrims an early start.

The great host is made up of men who have climbed snowy mountains, and traversed burning deserts, and slept in the chill night air of naked highlands and damp marshes and fever-smitten wastes. They have come from Parthia and Armenia and Mesopotamia, from Athens and Ephesus and Rome. They have been sojourners in Greece and Italy and Spain. They have endured hunger and weariness and peril on the land, they have encountered tossing and tempest and shipwreck on the sea. They have lived in all climates, and learned all the languages, and pursued all the occupations of the great Roman world. In all their wanderings they have ever been ready to say: "If I forget thee, O, Jerusalem, let my right hand forget her cunning. If I do not remember thee, if I prefer not thee above my chief joy, let my tongue cleave to the roof of my mouth." Drawn by the sacred and sorrowful memories of a thousand years, they come back to pray on the holy hill where their fathers worshipped and to fulfil their vows. They set forth singing for joy that the last day of their long journey has come, and before the sun goes

down their feet will stand within the gates of Jerusalem.

Some are exhausted with the hunger and hardships of travel, and they long for rest on the holy hill where sleepless angels guard the gates. Some are aged and infirm, and it is only by the help of younger and stronger arms than their own that they have come on the sacred pilgrimage. Some are sick, and their only hope is to see the gilded towers of the temple and the stony walls of Zion before they close their eyes on all earthly things. Some are poor and feeble, and they have come a thousand miles, begging all the way, that it may be their last, sad satisfaction to see Jerusalem and die. Some are young and ardent, and their hearts burn with enthusiasm when they think how near they are to the city which is the joy of the whole earth. Some are rich, and they set forth with horses and camels and servants and all the luxuries with which princes travel in the East. The one name that dwells on every lip, the one thought that inspires every heart, is Jerusalem, Jerusalem.

The excitement of the great host of pilgrims is quickened and intensified by the rumor that the Prophet of Nazareth will join the procession and make the ascent to-day. He has lodged with Zacchæus and brought salvation to the home of the publican. He goes out with the morning leaving behind him in the house a better light than that of the sun. No sooner does he appear in the street than the people run together, every one eager to follow close upon his steps to hear what he will

say and see what he will do on the day's journey. Possibly he may put forth his healing power upon some of the pilgrims who have sunk under the hardships of travel and are in danger of dying before they reach Jerusalem. Possibly this mighty miracle-worker will put himself at the head of the host and enter the city in triumph. And so all are rushing forward to get near him, and they tread upon each other as they press through the gate and pass out upon the highway, which is filled with one unbroken line of people, stretching across the plain and up the steep ascent of the wilderness. A little way beyond the city wall, beside the road where the multitude of travellers is greatest, and the sound of trampling feet and shouting voices fills the air, sits blind Bartimæus, the beggar. He is out early, although day and night are all one to him. He takes his stand where the uproar of the passing train is loudest, in hope that some one in the crowd will turn on him a pitying look and drop the smallest piece of money into his open palm.

The poorest of the many poor who cry for bread at the gates of cities and beside the highways of the Jewish land, he has blindness added to poverty that his cup of misery may run over. To him the whole of life is one long, deep night to which there is no return of day, no visitation from the glory and the gladness of God's blessed light. There is no flower in all the fields that opens on him its eye of beauty, he sees no smile of pity or of recognition in the "human face divine." The

heavens above him are one thick cloud through which no star ever shines. The vast and varied earth, spread out for other eyes to see, with the gladdening hues of sunlight on the hills and the russet robe of ripening harvests on the plains, to him is nothing but solid and substantial darkness. The bright stream springing from the fountain of Elisha, and singing in the shadow of purple vines and feathery palms all the way to the Jordan, is to him only a voice of one crying in the night and never bringing the day.

Placed in the midst of a landscape as wonderful and enchanting as any on which the sun shines in all its course, surrounded by historic associations that go back to the days of old when men had visions of God and angel hosts kept guard round the pilgrims' camp, he lives in the midst of a darkness which shuts him in as with an impenetrable wall on every side. Whether morning comes on golden wings from the gorgeous East and clothes the mountains in purple robes, or the sun flames from his midday throne upon the shadowy palms and the silent sea, or the evening brings forth troops of stars and kindles its camp-fires on the plains of heaven, it is all night to him. His darkened eyeballs roll in vain to find the lost day. His imprisoned soul yearns in vain for some way out of the thick gloom and the shadow of death with which he is surrounded.

It has not always been so with him, for he could once see. And the remembrance of the beauty and the glory with which God covers the green hills of Judea in the

blossoming spring and the ripening summer, and which he could once behold, deepens by contrast the darkness with which he is now surrounded. And what adds greatly to his misery he has been taught by the doctrines and traditions of his countrymen that blindness has been inflicted upon him in distinction from the rest of men as an especial judgment for his sins. He must believe that the great Father of light, whose smile fills the universe with beauty and blessing, only frowns on him with the thick clouds of his anger and gives him over to be the helpless prisoner of the powers of darkness. The ignorant peasant and the learned priest alike tell him that it is for his sins that he has been left to grope his way to the grave, which cannot be darker than the sightless sepulchre in which his soul is already buried.

And there he sits in such a case, feeling his way by the wall as he comes out of the city every morning, depending on others to tell him when it is night, uncertain whether his wretched condition and his supplicating cry will stir enough of pity in the passing traveller to secure him the means of prolonging his miserable life. Many pass without bestowing on him the pitiful boon of a morsel of food or a word of kindness. Many times the only alleviation which he obtains from the proud priest and the prouder Pharisee is the severe and self-righteous assertion that it becomes not man to bless with charity one whom God has cursed with blindness for his sins. Many times the idle vagabond, as wretched

as himself in everything but blindness, pauses a moment in passing to make mirth of his misery.

And so he must be looked upon by others, and so he must look upon himself while life lasts, as a living monument of heaven's vengeance on all transgressors of its sacred laws. The universe is to him without form and void, and darkness rests upon an infinite deep. The beauty of God's great work is swallowed up and lost in the abyss of night, and he himself is a more pitiable and afflicting desolation than the blasted plain of Sodom, towards which the swift Jordan flows within sight of his native city. There is no power in the touch or skill of the physician to restore to his darkened eye-balls their lost sensibility to heaven's light. No human hand can draw back the thick veil with which blindness has covered the universe to him as with the pall of death.

And yet within the last two years, from time to time, a most strange and exciting report has come to his ears. Occasionally, some one of the many passing by, more kindly and commiserating than the rest, has paused by his side, and in addition to his trifling gift has delayed to tell him of One possessing the power to open the eyes of the blind with a single word. He hears that that wonderful Friend of the needy is ever going from city to city in other portions of the country, performing such miraculous cures for the afflicted, and even raising the dead to life. Of late the fame of his mighty works has come nearer, and has been accredited by more

numerous witnesses. And blind Bartimæus, ever sitting by the wayside begging, has even begun to hope that the Friend of the friendless will some day pass in or out of the gate of Jericho, and in passing graciously pour the light of day on him.

Often has he thought that he would gladly travel to the utmost boundary of the land if he could thus secure the opportunity for one moment to lift up his supplicating cry for help within hearing of the divine Deliverer. All the riches of the world would be as nothing to him in comparison with one word of healing power from the lips of that mighty and merciful One who can make the deaf hear and the blind see. He begins to suspect that this extraordinary Teacher may be the promised Son of David, the Deliverer of Israel, of whom the ancient prophets spoke. And what interests the blind man more deeply, this Jesus of Nazareth is said to be the Friend of sinners. He glories in the mission of mercy to the fallen and the hopeless. He never withholds his help from the guilty and the outcast. He speaks to them words of kindness and encouragement. He freely displays his miraculous power in behalf of all who cry to him for help.

Be it so then, as he has been often told, that his blindness is the curse of God on him for his sins, still in the Friend of sinners he might venture to hope. He would not be spurned by one who cleansed the loathsome leper of uncleanness which corrupted the body because it had first polluted the soul. He would not be scorned

THE BLIND RECEIVE THEIR SIGHT.

by one who cast out the foul spirit from those who had been possessed by the demons of darkness for their wickedness. He who never shrank from contact with the vilest, if by approaching them he could do them good—surely he would not say of blind Bartimæus, "Behold one cursed of God for his sins," and shaking his garments pass on his way more rapidly to avoid the sight and the touch of the sinner.

And yet often as he has listened with eager attention to the tales told him by delaying travellers of the mighty works of Jesus of Nazareth, he has only thus learned the more bitterly to deplore his still continued blindness. He has long listened in vain for any announcement from the passing multitude that Jesus is among them. He has no kind friend to take him by the hand and lead him away to those favored portions of the land where the Friend of sinners may be found ready to heal the humblest applicant for his help. He can do naught but sit here by the gate of Jericho, with the feeble and uncertain hope that perchance the Prophet of Nazareth may pass that way and have compassion on him.

And so now at last it comes to pass on this blessed morning, when the great host of pilgrims is setting forth for Jerusalem, that blind Bartimæus hears the sound of trampling feet and the uproar of many voices passing along the narrow streets within the walls, and moving towards the gate of the city where he sits. And when he asks the meaning of the strange tumult, he is told that Jesus of Nazareth passeth by. Now then at

last has come his first, it may be his last and only opportunity, to recover his sight. Now, if ever, must the pall of darkness be lifted from him, and he shall behold again the magnificence of the blue heavens, the beauty of the green earth, the majesty of the eternal hills, and the splendor of the gorgeous day. Now, if ever, he shall be led back to the gates of light from which he has been driven forth to wander in a world of darkness and in the shadow of death. Now, if ever, he shall be restored to the lost paradise of which he has been dreaming evermore through the long night of years.

How priceless the value of the single opportunity presented to blind Bartimæus by the passing of Jesus of Nazareth this one day! The mighty Helper of the needy is within hearing but a few moments, and when gone may never return. How much deeper will be the darkness of future years to the blind if he shall have it to remember that once his eyes might have been opened for asking, but he failed to ask.

And yet it is not all a matter of course that this poor, blind beggar shall receive his sight, even though Jesus of Nazareth be passing so near that the prisoner of darkness can hear the sound of the Saviour's steps. It may cost him much to gain a gift which may be had for asking. This man has been named and pointed at with pity and horror by the most devout of his countrymen as one smitten of God for his sins. Shall he presume that the holy Prophet of Nazareth will be more indulgent towards the sinner than his own friends and neighbors?

Then again, may it not be that the reports which have come to his ears concerning the healing power of Jesus are all exaggerations, dreams and delusions of excited and ignorant minds? If he asks so strange and miraculous a thing as that his eyes may be opened, will he not expose himself to the contempt of the thoughtful, and the mockery of the multitude, and so deprive himself of the meagre support which comes from their pity and charity? Were it not wiser to improve this opportunity only to make more careful inquiry concerning Jesus, and if satisfactory evidence of his divine power and benignity should be secured, be prepared at another time to seek his aid?

Then still again, the most learned and religious of his countrymen have said that this Jesus is a deceiver of the people. They say that he performs his mighty works by help from the powers of darkness. They say that his whole influence is misleading, his whole life an imposture, dangerous to the peace of the state, and subversive of the piety of the people. If Bartimæus should ask the performance of a miraculous work from such an one, would he not renounce faith in God, and bring on himself a worse evil than blindness?

Thus a cautious and distrustful man might easily have spent in hesitancy or consideration the few moments while Jesus was passing, and so he might have lost forever an opportunity which when gone he would give everything in the world to gain once more. There is nothing more irrational than reasoning when the call of the moment

is for instant choice, and infinite destinies depend upon immediate and decisive action. It is madness to consider, it is folly to delay, when the greatest gift may be had for asking, and the opportunity may be gone in a moment.

But blind Bartimæus at the gate of Jericho was guilty of no such considerate folly as that. He wasted no time in studying proprieties of speech or attitudes of supplication. It was enough for him to know that Jesus of Nazareth was passing by. He asked only for such help as could be given to the guilty, for he asked for mercy. He assumed safely and unhesitatingly that the mercy of Jesus would be enough for him. He lifted up his cry with a determination which would not be put to silence by the rebukes of the multitude, or the apparent inattention of Jesus himself.

When told, at last, that Jesus had stopped in the way and called him, he rose, cast aside his loose garment that he might be the freer to run, and rushed forward in his blindness, without waiting to be led, in the direction of the divine Helper, whom he could not see. He was ready to risk everything only to hear one word of hope from that voice which could speak the dead to life. And when told to name the act of mercy which he would have done for him, he showed the greatness of his faith by asking that which divine power alone can do.

And as of old there was needed only one omnific word, and light sprang into being, so now, Jesus speaks the one word "SEE," and blind Bartimæus received his sight

and followed him in the way, praising and rejoicing. That one word of Jesus rolled back the darkness with which the universe had been covered to the blind, and created for him a new world of light and beauty, a new life of joy and praise. The long night of years came to an instant close, and the glorious noon of recovered sight flashed upon him without waiting for the slow approach of the breaking day.

And now it seems to him as if the whole world were a new creation, and all for him. Henceforth for him the sun shall rise, and shine, and set, in glory. The morning shall come from the gorgeous East, "arrayed in gold imperial," the night shall bring forth its troops of stars and the most ancient heavens shall stand firm for him to see. The clouds shall put on their varied hues, the hills and valleys shall be dressed in living green, and the flowers shall be arrayed in robes surpassing the purple of kings, just to make a holiday of life for him. For him the seasons shall come and go, the fruit form and the harvests ripen, and the chief things of the ancient mountains, and the precious things brought forth by the sun, and all the beautiful forms and hues and order of the great world shall be as much for him as if made for his pleasure and given him for a possession. So the blind man feels in the first burst of light that flashes in upon his soul with the gift of sight.

And now he sees, not simply with the restored sensibility of the bodily eye, but with "the vision and faculty divine," of faith in the Son of God. The restored world

on which he now looks with unutterable joy is not simply the one which he lost with the loss of sight. In the ecstasy of his new life it seems to him as if it were Paradise restored. The sunlight of the morning rests upon it with a glorious and beneficent beauty, as if it were the smile of God on pronouncing his new creation very good. The many voices that sounded unpitying and unmusical to the blind man in his darkness now seem to him like the echo of that one word of Jesus by which his eyes were opened. The power of that quickening word has poured light upon the soul as well as upon the eye, and the infinite love which gave it utterance has set up its throne in his heart and made him a new creature in the image of God.

He can now find nothing but mercy in the awful affliction which he had been taught to regard only as a curse. For it has been by the blindness of the eye that spiritual light has found entrance to the darker chamber of the soul. Were he now to lose again, beyond recovery, the sight of the bodily eye, still so much the more would the celestial light of the divine love shine inward upon the soul, and he would still continue to live in a new, spiritual creation, illumined all over with heaven's holy light. And all this blessed experience of unutterable joy, this deliverance from a universe of darkness and a destiny of despair, bestowed upon one, poor, benighted, and most afflicted soul, in answer to his first believing prayer unto him who is the Light of the world.

The multitude move on in the light of the morning,

shouting and rejoicing, with Jesus in the midst of them, towards the Holy City. They leave the plain and begin the steep and rocky ascent through the wilderness. They wind through deep and narrow defiles. They climb over bare and lofty ridges. They skirt the edge of the precipice, and they pass under overhanging cliffs. All the way they go, singing, and the refrain of every song is—Jerusalem. But in all that host following Jesus and going before, up the steep ascent to the house of the Lord, the man that went with the freest step and the gladdest heart was Bartimæus. For him the dumb mountains broke forth into singing, and the waste places of the wilderness did blossom as the rose. For him the hardest and weariest road in the world was adorned with unearthly beauty, and the sun shone as fair as on creation's day. If he had been going up in the company of angels in the pathway of light which Jacob saw in the Bethel dream, his heart could not have been more completely filled with strange and unutterable joy.

We see not now the face of the Son of man as the multitude saw him of old going up to Jerusalem. No tidings come to tell us of his giving sight to the blind, or standing at the door of the tomb and bidding the dead come forth in any land. No curious multitude gather to hear him speak in desert places or in the busy streets. No voices are heard at the city gates or by the wayside, saying—"Jesus of Nazareth passeth by." The land where he lived is far off, and the time long ago. If we traverse the paths that he trod, we can-

not find his footsteps. If we go to the site of the lake-side city where he made his home, there is not a house on the land or a sail on the sea.

And yet for all the practical purposes of his redeeming work, there is more of Christ in the world now than there was in the gospel age. Many lands have become holier than that which was trodden by his blessed feet. Many cities have been more exalted than Capernaum, many homes more blessed than that where Jesus lodged in Bethany. He walks unseen through all of our streets. He comes on messages of mercy to millions of homes. He stands ready to breathe his loving spirit into every heart. He is ever passing by in the ministrations of his word, with the power to deliver all souls from the darkness of doubt and the doom of despair. The deep sense of need, which no riches of the earth can relieve, the sigh of penitence which never finds utterance on the lip, the longing for peace which the world can never satisfy, are all known to him. By such experiences of want and sorrow and unrest, he presses upon every soul the question which he put to the blind at the gate of Jericho—What wilt thou that I should do unto thee?

The gospel of Jesus, from beginning to end, is pervaded with the one most divine, most distinctive idea —help for the needy, light for the blind, redemption for the lost. And Jesus himself comes in all the ministrations of his Spirit and his word to bring his freely offered help, his full and everlasting salvation within the reach of every soul. No human tongue can describe, no finite

mind can conceive the value of the blessings brought within the reach of all where Jesus of Nazareth passeth by. No expressions of gratitude and praise can be too strong for the lips of those to whom this mighty Helper comes morning, evening and at noon of day, saying—What wilt thou that I should do unto thee?

Along all the highways of life there are many blind, groping for the lost day and finding it not, longing for repose and never at rest, seeking for the chief good of life and never satisfied. Blind to their own interest, they gather riches and are always poor. Blind to their own greatest danger, they surround themselves with a thousand shields of earth and are never safe. Blind to their own happiness, they lay up for themselves regret and sorrow while living only for pleasure. Blind to their own conduct, they disown and deny the greatest Friend they have in the universe, and yet they claim to be the very soul of truth and honor. Blind to their own destiny, they live for earth and time alone, and leave the endless future to take care of itself. To all the higher interests of immortal man, to all the blessed and glorious prospects of life beyond death, the anxious, burdened, gain-seeking, pleasure-loving children of this world are utterly blind. They work hard and get the poorest pay. They spend much and never get their money's worth. They strive in vain to content themselves with pleasures and possessions which must perish when their real existence has only just begun.

To all such Jesus comes to take away their blindness, and open their eyes upon a new world of exhaustless riches and everlasting beauty. He offers to do for them that which the wisest and mightiest have never been able to do for themselves. He stands ready to bestow upon them as a free gift a possession which all the treasures of the earth would not be rich enough to buy. He would give them peace that passeth all understanding. He would give them hope which shall live when death itself shall die. He would make them heirs of an inheritance which were cheaply bought with all the riches of the earth.

Men of the world move on in the great procession of life, darkling and murmuring as they go, and they little think how often Jesus of Nazareth meets them in the way, ready to pour the light of heaven's peace and joy and rest into their souls, and they see him not. And yet he speaks with a voice to be heard. He addresses reason with arguments and evidences of infinite power. He quickens conscience with the awful sense of violated duty. He overawes the spirit with the solemnity of death and the dread of eternal judgment. He speaks as a friend, faithful and true. He seals the sincerity of his appeal by the testimony of his dying love. The bonds of the world must be strong upon the man who, when so addressed by the Friend of sinners, can withhold himself from bursting out with the cry—"Jesus, Lord, have mercy on me."

Sometimes the heart is touched and melted into ten-

derness by the silent reading of the story of the cross. Sometimes the sense of obligation sits in awful and imperial judgment in the secret place of the soul, and the convicted man is his own most dreaded accuser. Sometimes the strong man is burdened and bowed down with the utter wretchedness of living and dying without peace and without pardon. It were better to decline the offer of the brightest crown on earth than to harden the heart against the tender appeal of the Saviour's dying love. It were better to suffer imprisonment in the darkest dungeon for life, or to be tortured, not accepting deliverance, even unto death, than to stand condemned before the bar of one's own conscience. It were better to be at conflict with all the powers of the earth than not be at peace with God.

Disappointment comes in the high day of hope and gladness, and reveals the vanity of all earthly things. Eternity casts its awful shadow upon the brightest paths of time. The dread realities of the unseen world appear as presences that will not be put by, even though the heart be on fire with passion or intoxicated with pleasure. The angel of sorrow comes with veiled face and darkens the household with the shadow of death. The grave takes to its cold bosom one that was bound to the living with bonds stronger than life.

In all such moments of deep questioning and earnest thought, when the tongue has no power to tell the things that are in the soul, the suffering Son of man is near with the offer of his divine sympathy to heal the deepest

sorrow and to make the sorest bereavement the greatest blessing. He comes to set the door of the kingdom of heaven open for the weary to enter and find rest. He comes to show the need of redemption and at the same time his own willingness and power to save.

Sometimes a solitary thought comes like a living visitant from the unseen world, and takes possession of the mind in a waking hour of the night. Sometimes the remembered tone of a voice which was silent long ago, or the look of a face on which the dust of the grave has rested for many a year, is suddenly armed with a mysterious and irresistible power to sway the heart and to control every feeling. Sometimes the repetition of an argument, a warning cry, a tender appeal which had been heard a hundred times without emotion, suddenly has power to carry reason, conscience and heart captive. Sometimes the memory of the dear old mother, whose last breath went out in prayer for her children, or of the counsel of a father which was kindly given and carelessly forgotten, will bring tears to eyes that seldom weep.

And in God's all-teaching providence, every such throb in the inner life of the heart is a voice sent from heaven to say, "Jesus of Nazareth passeth by. The Friend of the friendless is near with help. The Seeker of souls is following close upon the footsteps of the wandering in search of the lost." And to have one clear, strong, impression of Christ's nearness and willingness to save is a blessing of so great worth that one might well toil for years and travel round the earth just

to have that feeling once. And there is no cloud so dark as that upon the mind of him who suffers such blessed influences to come and go as if they were trifles light as air.

Of all questions that ever demand the attention of earnest, thinking men, this should be considered and settled first—What shall I do to be saved? It is the Bible way of putting the question—How shall I gain the true purpose of life? How shall I come into harmony with the one Supreme Power which reigns in all worlds and determines all destinies, and will endure throughout all ages? How shall I escape subjection to the false, the unreal, and the unsatisfactory, and rise to the true and blessed life of peace, and purity, and love? The philosophers of the world have never answered such questions in any such way as to satisfy the mind or save the soul. Jesus himself, in his own person, is the way, the truth, and the life. Following him, we are safe. Believing him, we are true. Living for him, we shall never die.

The Perfumed House.

Then took Mary a pound of ointment of spikenard, very costly, and anointed the feet of Jesus, and wiped his feet with her hair: and the house was filled with the odor of the ointment.—JOHN xii. 3.

MARY ANOINTING THE SAVIOUR'S FEET.

XX.

THE PERFUMED HOUSE.

THE legends of the saints often say that a sweet perfume rises from the spot where the blood of martyrs sinks in the earth, a sacred odor like incense comes forth from the tomb where the bones of the blessed are enshrined in marble. Men love to believe that unsightly things are made beautiful by faith, and that dens and caves are made holy by the vigils of saints who waked at midnight to pray, and rose before the sun to begin the day with song.

A truer story tells us that the house where Jesus lodged for the night in Bethany was once filled with a perfume which has become the symbol of the most precious offerings to Christ, and which has taught millions how to make the lowliest home more holy than the shrines of saints and the ashes of martyrs. And the perfume which filled the house in Bethany, and which is still diffusing itself through the world, was only such a gift as every true and loving heart can give. It was in fact the gift of the heart alone which made the perfume precious, and gained for the giver the memorial of a blessed and an everlasting name.

Jesus was on his way to Jerusalem. He had come up the steep Jericho road for the last time. He must

needs rest in Bethany over night. A special entertainment was provided for him in the house which had been gladdened by the return of Lazarus from the dead. The friends that sympathized with the rejoicing family joined with them in welcoming Jesus to the house, and in commemorating the mighty miracle which had filled all Jerusalem with wonder. It was only six days before the crucifixion, and Jesus was on his way to meet the great sacrifice which awaited him there.

As he came up the long and steep ascent from the vale of the Jordan, he seemed to his disciples to be wrapt in an ecstasy of feeling so exalted that it filled them with wonder and awe. They did not dare to speak to him nor even to walk by his side. There was something so unspeakable in his sorrowful and self-mastered intensity of expression, that they were afraid to look at him or to be near him. They fell behind and questioned among themselves what new and strange rhapsody had come upon their Master. They went so far in their wonder at his unwonted appearance as to express the doubt whether he were altogether in his right mind. And then the next moment they were carried away with their little ambitions, and they disputed among themselves who should hold the highest place in the earthly kingdom which their Master was soon to set up. Then they saw, in the rapt and exalted expression of Jesus, a foregleam of the glory and majesty with which he would soon shine forth before the world.

It was in vain that Jesus called his disciples to him

and told them in plainer terms than ever before that the crown which awaited him was the cross, and the glory with which he should shine forth before all nations was the glory of self-sacrifice, the triumph of submission to death for the good of others. They heard his words as if they had been the words of one that dreamed. They thought they knew better. And when they fell back and left Jesus to go on before, they took up the old talk about earthly thrones and seats at the right hand and left hand of an earthly king.

When they reached Bethany the hospitable house where Jesus loved to go, and where his coming was always welcome, was already filled with guests. Many had come up from Jericho on the way to the feast, and many had come out from Jerusalem both to meet Jesus away from the crowd of the city, and also to see Lazarus, who had been waked to life after having slept the sleep of death four days. The supper was prepared, the guests were reclined in their places, and all eyes were turned upon the two at the head of the table, Lazarus, who had been dead and was alive, and Jesus, at whose call the sleep of death was broken and the dead came forth from the tomb.

While the feast went on and the murmur of voices filled the house, Mary, moved by her own deep love to Jesus, and by an unconscious premonition of his coming death, brought into the guest-chamber an alabaster box of very precious ointment, and broke the box before all the company and anointed the feet of Jesus. She be-

came so entirely absorbed and devoted in the sacrificial act that she lost all thought of the presence of others, and she bowed herself down weeping, and wiping with her hair the feet that so soon were to be nailed to the cross. It seemed to her for the moment that the great tragedy of the crucifixion were finished, and she were there to anoint the sacred body for burial. The odor of the ointment filled the whole house, and made the supper table seem like the altar of incense in the temple worship.

The whole company must needs know what was done, and every guest must have a word to speak in praise or blame of such impulsive and passionate devotion. One voice, harder and harsher than the rest, called it a waste. Even one who had been counted among the disciples expressed indignation that such a free expenditure should be made for a mere sentiment, an inconsiderate impulse of emotion. He claimed to combine great practical sagacity with great benevolence of heart, while saying that the precious ointment might much better have been sold and the proceeds given to the poor. Not that he cared for the poor, but he kept the purse of the company and paid himself first for the safe-keeping of all that was put therein.

Jesus rebuked the malicious parsimony of Judas and the unkind murmurs of the guests with the memorable words—Let her alone. Against the day of my burying hath she kept this. Verily I say unto you, wheresoever this gospel shall be preached in the whole world, there

shall also this that this woman hath done be told for a memorial of her.

No other promise like this ever came from the lips of Jesus. And this Mary of Bethany is the only woman in all the past with respect to whom we have a divine and special assurance that her fame and the influence of one act of her life shall fill the world and endure through all time. When Cleopatra of Egypt, and Zenobia of Palmyra, and Catharine of Russia are forgotten, or are remembered only to be pitied or despised, Mary of Bethany shall be honored with fond and grateful devotion. And this feast in the house of Simon, to which many came and brought some measure of honor with them, shall be remembered and talked about in coming ages, not because of the great company and the high character of the guests that were there, but because of that one act of devotion which prudent men called a waste, and sensitive men thought ill-timed and out of place.

Eighteen hundred years have passed since this promise was given, and already the name and the humble service of the modest and meditative woman of Bethany have become known to a greater number of persons than any woman's name to be found in all profane history. The brief story of what she did at that feast in Simon's house has been read and heard with profound interest by countless millions. Her simple and affecting testimonial of love to Jesus has touched the fountain of tears and brought millions of offerings to the poor, for whom the

wasteful parsimony of the disciples would have kept her gift. The one act of consecrating and sacramental devotion, into which she poured her whole weeping and passionate soul, has done more to make the human heart a sanctuary for the indwelling of holy love than all ever done by the proud daughters of princes or the worshipped stars of beauty in imperial courts.

And this woman of Bethany was not in the least indebted to riches or rank or personal accomplishments for the blessed memory which crowns her name in all Christian annals. She was not a king's daughter. She had not learned the accomplishments of refined and cultivated society. She could not boast of troops of admirers, or of costly presents laid at her feet. The artists of modern times, in painting the scene in Simon's house at Bethany, have indeed adorned the grateful worshipper at Jesus' feet with surpassing beauty. But the sacred historian does not say that she was beautiful. We are left to infer the contrary, from the fact that she lived alone in the house of her brother and sister, in a land where the lot of the unmarried woman was one of peculiar neglect. She would hardly have been left to live so if she had presented any peculiar attractions in person or manners or worldly estate. The highest praise was given her by Jesus when he said—She hath done what she could.

And she had no thought of doing anything to attract attention at the time, or anything just to cause herself to be remembered, when she anointed the feet of Jesus.

She knew very little of his true greatness and glory. She had not seen him on the mount of transfiguration, nor had she heard a voice from heaven, saying—This is my beloved Son, hear ye him. She did not know that even then legions of angels were ready to minister unto him as their Lord and King. She had, indeed, stood by when Jesus called Lazarus from the tomb. But that was done so quickly, so quietly, and Jesus went back with them to the house, to be entertained and ministered unto so much like any weary traveller, that Mary saw in him simply the friend of the family, and she loved him because he had come to comfort them, and yet also to weep with them in their great sorrow.

And she also saw in Jesus one whom the world despised. She knew that the rulers of her people were bent upon putting him to death. She felt that if he went to Jerusalem, as he was certain to do, she might never see him in the quiet home at Bethany again. And it was just because she, a timid and sensitive woman, braved the scorn of the world and the rebuke of friends in her own home, and openly declared her love for Jesus by the solemn act of sacramental anointing, that she obtained for herself an honorable and blessed memorial which shall outlast all time. It was by her self-forgetting devotion to One whom others were impatient to destroy that she gained for herself an everlasting name, which shall not be cut off.

And so evermore Christ will keep the good name of all who count no sacrifice too costly to be offered upon

the altar of faith and love to him. Their memorial shall be ever before him, graven upon the palms of his hands and precious in his sight. They shall be remembered with gratitude, when the selfish are despised and the proud are put to shame. The grand aim and purpose of life is most sure to be gained by him who forgets everything but duty, and is animated by nothing but love. To be happy ourselves we must live to make others happy. To have all the good that riches can buy, we must give all we have to him who gave himself for us.

The most wretched lot in the world may be his who is the farthest removed from the necessity to toil and suffer. Character can be built up and cultivated only by discipline, and the best school sets the hardest lessons, and the wisest teacher does most to make his pupils help themselves. Better is it to pour out possessions, talents, and affections, in grateful devotion to Christ, and in that way seek for happiness here and glory hereafter, than to expend upon self everything that the world can give, and then go to hear, in a desolate land beyond the grave, that voice which is the echo of a reproving conscience and a decayed heart—Son, remember that thou, in thy lifetime, receivedst thy good things. It is better to fix the heart on such good things as will satisfy now and will grow richer and better in possession forever.

Every day's observation proves that no advantage of birth, or condition, or talent, or success, can procure hap-

piness, even in this life, no afflictions or losses can take away the true joy of living which comes from a good conscience and a heart at peace with God. No disappointment can defeat the most cherished hope of him who seeks his highest good in God. No earthly loss or sorrow can destroy his peace. He walks the earth as a sovereign, and he looks to the inheritance of the heavens as his own. He is as sure of having all he needs as that God is rich enough to supply his wants. He is beholden to no good fortune, he is dependent upon no earthly condition for his daily happiness. He receives all directly from him with whom is the exhaustless fountain of joy, and at whose right hand are pleasures forevermore.

If I were looking for the most unhappy of all the children of men, I should not go first to the hovels of the poor, or the prisons of the persecuted. In the splendid and coveted mansion of the millionaire there are wounded hearts which no medicine of the physician can heal. In the gorgeously furnished apartments of princely homes there are sighings and groanings of spirit to which no hired services can minister relief. You may recline at noonday upon couches where kings might repose amid splendors befitting their royal state, your bed at night may be canopied with purple and silken draperies wrought with all the costly and graceful devices of art, and yet in sleep you may find no rest, and in waking wish that life and thought had never come back. There is no skill of man which can

"Minister to a mind diseased,
Pluck from the memory a rooted sorrow,
Raze out the written troubles of the brain,
And, with some sweet, oblivious antidote,
Cleanse the stuffed bosom of that perilous stuff
Which weighs upon the heart. Therein the patient
Must minister to himself."

And he can do that only by taking thankfully what the divine Physician gives, and seeking health and life in the way which he prescribes.

In the gay and gorgeous hall at midnight, where artificial light outflames the sun, and voluptuous music intoxicates and maddens the passions of earth, may be seen the beautiful and the bright-robed, radiant with smiles, and floating like birds of Paradise through the mazes of the dance. And yet these giddy and graceful creatures of fashion and frivolity may carry in their bosoms, beneath the blaze of gems and the flash of sparkling eyes, the torture of fires that die not. To them the soft strain that breathes upon the air in the lull of voices and the pause of mirth may seem like the wail of the pitying spirits of heaven over souls that are lost. Reposing at luxurious ease in the brilliant carriage which flashes along the street and attracts the admiring gaze of all beholders, may be seen one who has come forth from an unhappy home at midday, calling it morning, striving to lose in the open air the torturing burden of an hour, and returning disappointed, with the burden still on the heart, wearied without exertion and wretched without cause.

Such was not the lot of the woman in Bethany, whose history shall be told in all the earth, and whose name shall be held in blessed and everlasting remembrance. And yet such is the lot to attain which millions would sacrifice all peace on earth and all hope of heaven. Such is the happiness of those who choose, and in judgment more than in mercy are permitted to have, their good things in this lifetime. And the opposite extreme of want and neglect is just as full of envy and disappointment and despair to those who think happiness depends upon any earthly state, and who never learn to live by faith on the Son of God. To that faith belongs the greatest victory ever gained in this world. That faith can make sceptres and crowns from the tools of the humblest trade, and it can give common men the serenity of saints and the majesty of kings.

In his floorless cabin, weary, hungry and cold, the dark-browed, believing Christian bondman laid down at night to sleep in his crib of straw. He had toiled all his life long for another's gain. He had no hope that he should ever be anything else in this world than the unpaid vassal of another's will. When wronged he had no defender. The supreme law of the land denied him all right, even to property in himself. Public opinion was even more unkind than the law. His only portion was to toil while he had the strength, and to die when his labor was no longer worth his living to his master.

And yet the transforming faith of that poor slave made his lowly cabin a holy place, where angels de-

lighted to go on messages of love from the throne of heaven. Like the scourged and imprisoned apostles in the olden time, he woke at midnight to pray and to sing praises unto Jesus. In his sleeping and his waking hours, he dreamed and he sung of a kingdom that shall have no end, and of a crown that he should wear when the fetters of bondage were broken. And that poor slave, hopeless and helpless in the house of bondage, and yet with such high expectations of coming freedom, was richer and happier than all the wealth and glory of nations could make him without the hope of eternal life. Take away from him the inheritance which he holds by faith, and give him all the wealth that "sinews bought and sold have ever earned," and he would suffer a greater loss by the change than would the mightiest earthly king if deprived of his crown and sent away to a rocky island of the ocean to die in exile.

I have seen an aged Christian woman, whose life for twenty years had been spent in darkness as deep as the blackest midnight. In all that time she had not been cheered in her desolation by the light of one human smile. She had not seen a flower blossom nor a star shine, nor a single change come over the face of God's beautiful earth. Darkness had come upon the whole visible world to her, and had shut her in as with an impenetrable wall on every side, and her imprisoned spirit yearned in vain to find the lost day.

And so that helpless captive of the power of darkness knew that she must live as long as life lasted with no

hope left save that her Bible, which she could no longer read, was still true, and that her Saviour, to whom she had given the love of her youthful heart long years before, would be with her in all her affliction. The grave itself would not be darker than the living tomb in which the soul was already buried. She must go at the summons of death without ever seeing the face of her own children, only hearing their voices bidding her farewell in the dark. However much she might long to have one look at her earthly home and the faces that bent over in love at the parting hour, that last sad satisfaction must be denied her, and she must die without the sight.

And yet that aged sufferer, with blindness added to many other afflictions, did not complain. The cloud that had veiled the bodily vision did not cast a shadow upon the soul. When I endeavored to commiserate her unhappy condition in the loss of sight, she said, with the simplicity of a child's faith—"I shall soon see. The long night is almost gone and I am looking for the morning. When death opens the door, I shall pass from this dark prison into the full day."

As I visited that aged disciple at different times in successive years, I always left her humble abode with the feeling that all the kingdoms of the earth, and the glory of them all, were a worthless bauble compared with the serene and quiet faith with which she leaned upon her Saviour's supporting hand, and moved silently on under the heavy cloud of continual night, in the

dark pilgrimage of life, without murmuring and without fear.

And I would it were in my power to make the young, the healthful, and the strong believe the words, when I say that a calm and obedient trust in God will be worth as much to them in their health and prosperity as it was to that blind and aged woman in her affliction. I would that all such could be persuaded to walk in the light before the darkness of trouble and sorrow comes, and the night of death settles down without any promise of returning day.

The good work which Mary wrought upon Jesus at Bethany by anointing him for his burial is not the only good deed which will never die. The everlasting memorial of her simple faith and love, kept alive and tenderly cherished in a doubting and disbelieving world, is a promise that no act of duty shall ever be forgotten before God, no gift of love shall ever lose its power to bless the hearts and beautify the homes of men. Jesus himself will remember and reward the simplest service, though it be only a cup of cold water given in his name and to the least of his disciples. Every purpose and every act of right-doing shall have its record in the Lamb's book of life, and its influence shall be kept alive to guide and to bless, to instruct and to save long as the world shall stand. And when the fashion of this world has passed away and God's purpose in its creation is complete, then still the good part which any one bore in its history shall continue to bring forth fruit in the blessed ages of the eternal life.

The light of Christian example and instruction may be diminished and obstructed for a time by the cloud of ignorance and unbelief, but it is light still and it can never be put out. Evil has indeed thus far prevailed over good to a fearful extent in this world, but evil is not the strongest power, it shall not always conquer, it shall not live forever. Ignorance is always weakness. With knowledge comes power. Superstition is only a shadow. When the true light shines it must pass away. Good, by its very nature, is immortal. God will no more suffer it to die than he will forget the work of his own hands, or forsake the soul that cries to him for help.

The humblest and poorest of the disciples of Jesus can start waves of blessing which shall deepen and widen and flow forever. You need not know, you need not suspect that you are doing anything great; you need not weary yourself with busy anxieties about success; you need not ask what the world will say, any more than Mary of Bethany paused to ask what the great company at the table would think or say before she poured the ointment upon the feet of Jesus. You have only to go on quietly, faithfully doing the work which God's providence assigns you, and you may be sure that the memorial of your life will be written in the books of heaven, and there will be redeemed souls in the final day to call you blessed.

The silent, teachable, trusting look with which Mary watched the countenance and caught the words of Jesus is still preaching to millions. The world is indeed full

of hurry and noise, of violence and conflict, and it may seem to us a waste of breath to speak gentle words when called to meet the whirlwind of strife and the thunders of battle. And yet in such a world God has promised that gentleness shall make his people great, by weakness they shall grow strong, by suffering they shall enter into joy, from failure they shall learn success, by defeat they shall conquer.

There is great power in gentle words to cheer sad hearts, to make home happy, to lift the weights from weary shoulders, to shed the light of the morning on the path which lies under the shade of night, to turn the whole current of life and open the door to waiting souls that are longing to enter into rest. The difference between a day of happiness and a day of misery to all in the house is often only the difference between the two little words, yes and no.

You may think a gentle word so small and common a thing that it is not worth speaking. And yet if you say it, it will sing all day like the song of the seraphim in some sensitive and loving heart. And if you say it not, a sigh will take the place of the song, and a sad day will cast its shadow upon a heart that already has as much as it can bear and not break. You can say good-night to a timid and sensitive child with love or anger in your voice, and the difference in the tone with which you speak the word may be to the child the difference between a night of weariness and of weeping and a night of the blessed sleep which God gives to his beloved.

Learn to speak the gentle words of love and kindness. There is as much in the tone and time of speaking as in the words themselves. Blame not the well-meaning, even if you think them mistaken. When hard voices murmured at Mary's offering and pained her heart with harsh rebuke, Jesus said, gently—Let her alone. She hath done what she could. Words of encouragement in well-doing are more wanted than words of blame. Count it not a trifling thing that you have cheered one weary, disheartened worker, whose field of toil lies alongside of your own. If you can do no more, call the name of the tired traveller who is falling behind in the way. Say to him—Cheer up, brother: we shall rest when we reach home. If you put your heart into your voice, a little word will lift him over a hard place, and he will start anew and step on as lightly as if an angel had taken his hand.

I once went at evening to the bedside of one whose journey was almost done. I repeated the words of peace which we have all learned from the lips of Jesus. "How glad am I," said that worn and weary sufferer, "that you have spoken these words. I had heard and read them a thousand times, but they will cheer me all night just because you have said them." And so they did. And when the day broke that chastened spirit went on the beams of the morning to the home where there is no more death.

Be ever mindful to speak the gentle words of hope and peace. There are many who need to hear them,

and they will cheer the hearts that know them best just because they are spoken with love in the voice. Be mindful to speak the gentle words of attention and kindness which everybody loves to hear. Speak them to the aged, who are burdened with the weight of years. Their eyes are growing dim, so that they cannot see the beauty of the world about them as they once saw it. Their ears are growing dull of hearing, so that they cannot catch the music of voices that once cheered them in the house of their pilgrimage. Speak to them the words of gentleness and love to comfort their fainting hearts as they go down the hill. Make their last remembrances of earth a foretaste of the life that shall be brighter and better beyond the river.

Speak gently to little children, whose frail life begins in pain, and whose first step in life's journey must be taken in sorrow. Let not their first days be darkened with frowns and fault-finding. Let them not be made old while young with premature cares and needless fears. Let them not feel that they must begin the march over the world's great waste, treading its thorny paths with their tender feet alone.

It is a sad thing for a little child to start out in the morning of life and have no strong and gentle guide to take his hand, no sunshine to show the way, and no tender, loving sympathy to cheer his heart. It is a great privilege to share in the service rendered to these little ones by their angels who do always behold the face of our Father in heaven. The highest and mightiest of the

heavenly host count it an honor to receive the charge from their King to lead a little child in the way of life.

There is great power in little acts of kindness and courtesy, little gifts of love and labor, little mementos of trust and affection. The widow's mite touches more hearts than the miser's million, because there is more love in it. The least gift becomes the greatest when it is given out of the sacred treasury of a true and loving heart. The alabaster box of precious ointment which Mary poured upon the feet of Jesus was called a waste by those who stood by and saw the act of impulsive and passionate devotion. And yet there was so much heart in the gift that it has opened a thousand other hearts to give a million-fold its value to the poor, and Mary's gift shall go on multiplying blessings for the poor to the end of time.

Some think they have so little to give, that it is not worth the while to give at all. They forget that Christ measures the worth of gifts by love, not by money. The gift most precious to him is the one given with the most love. You think you would girdle the earth with your charities if you had as much as some who give nothing. You can give now what Christ will prize above all riches, if you give as he gave to you, with all your heart. You can get all the satisfaction and all the reward that come from giving millions if you give the least when the least is all you have.

Some think they can do so little with their best efforts

that their labor is not worth counting, and so they do not try. They forget that Christ has work for all to do, and the reward of life comes not from the greatness of the task done, but from doing it well. The Master Builder has a great house to carry up from the foundation to the top stone. And it will be finished in the perfection of beauty if every laborer looks well to the task given him to do. It matters little whether you are called to work in gold or silver or iron or stone or earth. You are ever in the great Taskmaster's eye. He who counts the drops of the dew and numbers the very hairs of your head, will see every effort and sympathize with every strain of mind and muscle in his work. And when the living house of his holy church is fully built, and its polished stones shine forth with immortal splendor in the light of heaven, the laborer who has been faithful in the least shall receive the same reward with him who has been faithful in much. Fidelity is what the Master wants. And if it be the least and lowest task which he assigns, so much the more honor shall come to him who does it well.

It is not necessary to be boisterous and boastful to overcome the world. The calmness and the self-possession of a right purpose and a pure heart disarm opposition and win more than violence. The rudest nature, that would hurl back threatening and rebuke with fiercer words of wrath, may be mastered and melted into penitence and love by a single look like that which Jesus turned upon Peter in the hall of denial. You need not

wait for great occasions; you need not ask for extraordinary abilities; you need not have a thought what the world will think of you. Only let your daily walk be a living testimony unto Jesus, and God will keep that testimony in the world, widening and deepening and intensifying in power, long as the gospel shall be preached for the salvation of men.

Every world in the material universe is bound to every other by immutable law, and no atom is ever lost from the immensity of things created. The circlet of waves produced by the fall of a pebble travels to the uttermost parts of the sea. The blow that I strike with my hand is felt around the earth and beyond the stars. Much more pervasive and enduring are the forces that form character and fix the destiny of immortal beings. Every act of duty starts a wave of light and of blessing that shall roll and expand for endless ages. It is the sceptre's dismal philosophy which says, "The good which men do in their lives is oft interred with their bones." In the service of Christ effort is success, and a right purpose is victory. No faithful laborer can fail to find many among the host of the redeemed to call him blessed.

Not many years ago, if we may believe a tale many times told, a European philosopher, unrolling the countless bandages of an Egyptian mummy, found a few grains of wheat in the black and withered hand. Curiosity led him to plant the kernels in the colder soil of the north. The germ of life which had been imprisoned three thousand years in the dark charnel of death, responded

to the touch of warmth and moisture and light, and shot forth the green stalk and matured the ripened grain. And now, year by year, broad fields, sown from the produce of those revived kernels of Egyptian wheat, wave their rich harvests beneath the autumnal sun, and thousands of lives are sustained by food, the fruitful germ of which was so long imprisoned in the house of death.

And so the laborer in any department of Christian service, by precept or by example, may drop the seed-corn of the divine word into the cold, dead heart of the world, and many seasons may pass, and he may see no sign that the seed sown in patience and in sorrow will ever germinate or even retain its life. He may go on, year after year, faithful though despondent and sad of heart, working just because the Master says he must. He may make ten thousand unrecognized, unapplauded efforts for the good of others, and at last he may go down to the grave feeling that his life has been a failure, and that nothing of all that he has done will live after him to bless the world or to cause his name to be remembered with gratitude.

And yet the countless years of heaven alone may be sufficient to measure the blessed fruit springing from that life of toil, of patience and of disappointment. It may yet be found that the most needed and useful laborers in God's great vineyard of the world were those who were willing to toil on in the hardest places without apparent or applauded success. It may be the highest and best exercise of faith to believe that no right purpose, no

well-meant effort, can ever fail of its appropriate result or be forgotten before God. The great contest which truth is waging for the mastery of this world continues through all ages, and the delay of a year or of a century is no indication that truth has lost its power or that the divine purpose is defeated. He who counts a thousand years but as a day, can afford to wait. He whose work is without beginning and without end is never in a hurry.

Two hundred years ago, John Flavel, of Dartmouth, in England, driven out of his pulpit by the persecuting Act of Uniformity, was preaching in an open field. With his wonted earnestness and affectionate fervor of address, he spoke of the dreadful curse resting on all who love not the Lord Jesus Christ. Among the listeners on that day was a youth of fifteen, who heard the solemn words of the preacher, and went away as though he heard them not. Some of noble birth and of high intellectual culture were so deeply affected that they fell senseless upon the ground. But that thoughtless young man only listened and looked on as if he were a disinterested spectator. Soon afterwards he began a roving life upon the seas, and finally settled down for a permanent home, a faithless and a prayerless man in America. Meanwhile Flavel continued to preach the gospel which he loved, amid persecutions and many sorrows, and when the last joyful summons came, he went home to God in peace.

And eighty-five years passed by from that day of field

preaching at Dartmouth, and the boy of fifteen was now a man of a hundred years, and still a wanderer from God. The tender feelings, the ardent hopes and the quick conscience of youth had died in his old and guilty heart long ago. No ordinary faith could have believed that that seed-corn of divine truth planted by John Flavel's preaching eighty-five years before in the field, on the other side of the sea, still survived, and was destined to spring up and bear fruit unto eternal life.

But so it was. It chanced on a certain day that he found himself alone in an open field on his own farm. There was no weeping multitude around him to awaken his sympathies, and no preacher's solemn voice to tell him of his sin. Moved, he knew not how, that old man in his hundredth year, passing over all the intervening space of time, felt himself back again in the field at Dartmouth, hearing the fearful words—"If any man love not the Lord Jesus Christ, let him be accursed."

The message of heaven which the thoughtless youth so easily rejected eighty-five years before was mightier when speaking from the remembered past than when heard from the living voice. Then first the aged sinner found strength to roll the burden of the threatened curse from his heart, and to find peace through penitent and trusting love. He lived to the extraordinary age of a hundred and sixteen years, believing and rejoicing at last in the Saviour whom for a century he had rejected. And the awakening call of duty, which roused him from the sleep of impenitence and unbelief, came

from the remembered words of one who had rested from his labor for more than half a century.

Such is the persistency with which the truth retains its life and quickening power, even when it seems to have been blown away by the wind, or to have been cast into utterly barren ground. And one such example of effort apparently lost, living and working for good long after the laborer himself has forgotten his work, may give us hope and encouragement as we sow the seed of life beside all waters, morning, evening and at noon of day, withholding not our hand. No better confirmation of this great hope can be found than that which comes from the promise of Jesus, that the memorial of Mary's one good work at Bethany should go out into all the earth and live through all time.

Passion Week.

When Jesus knew that his hour was come that he should depart out of this world unto the Father, having loved his own which were in the world, he loved them unto the end.—JOHN xiii. 1.

XXI.

PASSION WEEK.

DRIVEN from Bethlehem by the wrath of a king, expelled from Nazareth by the violence of the people, received at Capernaum at first only to be rejected at last, denied the protection of the three homes which were his by birth, by residence and by adoption, Jesus comes to Jerusalem to be betrayed, and to Calvary to be crucified. Thirty years of retirement in humble toil, and three years of public ministry, are all that the world will endure of its Messiah. It is not enough to secure him acceptance that he heals the sick and feeds the hungry and raises the dead. It is not enough that he speaks as never man spake, and does the works which no man ever did, and endures the contradiction of sinners with the meekness and majesty of infinite love.

He must go down to a still lower depth of humiliation, he must take upon his soul the burden of a greater agony, he must give his very life in sacrifice before the stony walls of prejudice and hatred and unbelief will yield and give him access to the hearts of men. The testimony of the divine love must be confirmed by the infinite argument of the cross before the world will accept its own Redeemer or consent to be saved.

The closing scenes in the earthly life of our Lord are

especially sacred and interesting, because we see him moving on, step by step, with the awful shadow of the cross before him, and yet all the while he is serene and lifted up in view of his great Passion, and in anticipation of his great and final joy. The look of sadness in his face is illumined with heavenly light, and the tone of tenderness and pity in his voice touches his disciples more and more deeply as the last awful tragedy draws near. It becomes us to look upon him with deep reverence and adoring love as we see him advance with firm and fearless step to the great sacrifice of Calvary.

The first entrance of Jesus into Jerusalem on the great and solemn week of his passion has the appearance of a triumph. It gave the people an opportunity to break out in cries of enthusiasm, and to welcome the coming of a king who was most worthy to wear the crown of all the earth. But the triumph was short, and before the end of the week came, the hosannas of welcome gave place to the cry—Away with him, crucify him.

Jesus had walked up the wild and weary road from Jericho and the plain of the Jordan to Bethany, and he had spent his last earthly Sabbath at the house of his friends in that mountain village. In that most favored home he had rested and received the sacrificial anointing in preparation for the next Sabbath, when his wounded body should repose in the tomb and his spirit should be in Paradise. Knowing as he did all that was coming, others must have noticed a far-seeing look in his face

as he sat at supper in Simon's house. But to them there had always been a sacred and awful mystery about the Man of Sorrows, and that night they only saw a deeper shade of the same divine sorrow which they had seen upon him many times before.

It was the week of the Passover, and multitudes of pilgrims were on their way from Galilee to keep the great festival in the holy city. Some remained with him at Bethany on the day of rest. Many passed over the brow of Olivet and encamped in the gardens and orchards on the western slope of the mountain. Everywhere among the tents, on the hillside, and beyond in the streets of the city, they spread the tidings that the Prophet of Nazareth was two miles off at Bethany, and he would undoubtedly appear in Jerusalem before the close of the feast.

On the afternoon of Sunday, the first day of the Jewish week, Jesus renewed his journey, accompanied by a great multitude from Bethany who were eager to witness his reception in the city. He set forth knowingly and willingly to meet his death, when the new life of the year had come, and the whole land was green and blossoming with the glory of spring. Along his pathway bloomed the little red wind-flower which still grows out of the same stony soil and still bears the name of the blood-drops that fell from the cross. The olive and fig and vine were putting forth green leaves in response to the new life which the warm south wind had breathed into the world of nature as a symbol and prophecy of

that higher and more enduring life which Jesus was to give to men by his death.

Taking the most travelled road over the southern ridge of Olivet, and leading a large company from Bethany, he was met by a still greater multitude who had heard of his coming, and had gone forth from the camps on the hill-sides and from the streets of Jerusalem to welcome him. When the two great processions met, the one which came from the direction of the city turned back and went before, and the other which had started from Bethany followed with Jesus in the midst. Both united rent the air with shouts that were heard in all the streets and on all the hill-sides round about Jerusalem. Branches were broken from the palms by the way-side and strewn in the road, as men were wont to do when welcoming the return of a conqueror with the spoils of nations in his train. Others still more enthusiastic threw off their outer garments and spread them upon the ground to be trodden upon by the beast that bore the Son of David, even as in later times carpets were spread all the way from Bagdad to Mecca for the camel of the caliph to walk upon when the sovereign was making the long pilgrimage. And so far were the excited and shouting multitude from exaggerating the greatness of the occasion by their cries and demonstrations of joy, that Jesus himself said the stones would immediately cry out were the people to hold their peace.

Rounding the southern ridge of the mountain, and coming out upon a level platform of rock, Jesus beholds,

across the deep ravine of the Kidron, the whole magnificent city in one full and instantaneous view. Conspicuous above everything else the golden domes and pinnacles of the temple rise before him like the flame of a mighty sacrifice. The enclosure of the Holy House, with all its sacred courts, porches and colonnades, embracing an area of thirty-five acres of ground, is crowded with a million people. The dark, frowning rock of the castle of Antonia—the bright golden tints of the temple roofs—the white shining marble of the colonnades, built high upon the battlements—the many-colored robes of the multitude, and the swift motions of many hurrying to and fro, are all standing out, sharp and clear, to be seen from Olivet. The whole mass of compact streets and stone houses within the walls is crowded with people, and among the gardens and vineyards, on all the hill-sides facing the city, are encamped thousands upon thousands who have come up to the great national Feast. All this vast population is moved at the coming of Jesus, and the multitude around him lift up their voices in cries of joy so loud that some within the city walls, hearing the tumult and seeing the vast procession approaching, say, "The world has gone after him."

At this moment of triumph, when a half million voices are shouting his name, and the whole city, with its overflow of pilgrims covering the hills and filling the valleys, is moved with gladness by his coming, Jesus weeps. Not for himself, although he well knows that before the

week ends the hosannas of the multitude will give place to the cry, "Crucify him." Not because his work had failed, and his mission must close in defeat and disappointment. He weeps over the proud and beautiful city because she knows not the time of her visitation—because, blinded and doomed, she heeds not the things that belong to her peace. He weeps because the last and utmost appeal which he can make to the hearts of men by his death on the cross will still be rejected and treated with mockery by many to their own destruction. He weeps because the unhappy city will bring on herself wrath unto the uttermost, until her holy house and all her beautiful habitations are laid even with the ground —when by receiving his message of peace she might be made the joy of the whole earth, and all nations would bring their glory and their riches unto her, and all generations would call her blessed.

And so Jesus begins the great week of his passion with triumph and with tears. It is a week such as has no parallel in all history, and the destiny of immortal millions must depend upon the manner in which this weeping Man of Sorrows shall carry himself through to the end. The earthly triumph is soon past. But it will give place to another, when this lowly and rejected King shall have led captivity captive, and the angel host shall form the dazzling procession which welcomes him to a higher city than Jerusalem, and the everlasting gates of heaven shall be lifted up that the crowned and mighty conqueror may come in. The sorrow with which Jesus

weeps over unhappy Jerusalem shall give place to joy when he shall look back upon the travail of his soul and be satisfied with the fruits of his toil and suffering.

One of the earliest recollections of my youth takes me back to a great procession in some respects like that which went out to meet Jesus on Mount Olivet and to welcome him to Jerusalem. In the early morning of a summer's day the whole city from whence the multitude began their march was moved by the sound of gathering hosts. On foot, on horseback, in all manner of carriages, along all the highways, from a hundred towns the people came. Old and young, soldiers and citizens, men, women and children, riding, walking, running, marching, filled the streets, crowded the doorways, climbed walls, fences, trees and houses, all with excited and eager expectation, all speaking the name and rehearsing the history of one man, all anxious and impatient to catch the first sight of his coming.

After long delay and much preparation in marching and counter-marching, the great multitude moved out upon the road where the nation's guest was expected to come. I was but a child, and knew little what it all meant. But I can never forget the rush and the roar of trampling feet, the waving of banners, and the shouting, the roll of drums and the peal of bugles, and the thunder of cannon, when the cry arose in the distance —"There he comes."

Again after long delay, standing upon a high bank beside the road, I saw a carriage pass, and sitting in it

a slender, gray-haired, courtly-looking man, on whom all eyes were fixed and to whom all hearts did homage. It was Lafayette, the friend of Washington, the friend of America, the friend of man, who came fifty years before from a distant land and staked his honor and his life for the defence of our country in the hour of her greatest need.

And that great procession was formed and the whole population of a hundred towns was moved, and countless voices broke forth in shouts of joy that shook the hills to welcome one who had done what he could to make the nation free. The marching and the shouting, the music and the banners, the trampling feet and the cannon peal all said that American homes and laws, and schools, and lives were more precious because of what that one man had done. So the world in its best mood honors its benefactors.

But the coming of Jesus to Jerusalem was a greater event than the coming of Lafayette to America. If it was right and reasonable for the American people to go out from their towns and cities by thousands to welcome one who did much to make them a nation, much more was it becoming that the people of Jerusalem should go out to Mount Olivet, shouting and singing, to welcome him who came meek and lowly, bringing salvation.

There was indeed great excitement and confusion when Jesus appeared in sight of the city. There was hurrying to and fro, there were wild cries and passionate gestures. The people trod upon one another in the

crowd. Some waved palms of victory in the air. Some cut down olive branches of peace and strewed them in the way. Multitudes threw off their garments and carpeted the path for the beast that Jesus rode to tread upon. And when some grave and orderly persons sought to quell the tumult and asked the gentle and peace-loving Jesus to help them in quieting the people, he said that if human tongues were hushed, the dumb stones would take voice and cry out.

Even the calm and sorrow-stricken Master confessed that there was reason for such shouting and singing as were not altogether agreeable to men of quiet temperament and tasteful sensibilities. He came meek and lowly, and yet a king and a conqueror. And he would have the people show their loyalty to their rightful sovereign in such ways as they were wont to express the deepest feeling and the wildest joy.

When Dr. Chalmers was in the height of his fame and power as the foremost preacher, philosopher, and public benefactor in Scotland, George the Fourth, king of England, paid a visit to Edinburgh. Chalmers, moved by his profound reverence for the majesty of law and government as represented in the person of the sovereign, went down to the wharf where the king was to land, took his stand foremost in the crowd of many thousands, and with bare head and broad forehead and wildly gesticulating arms, he surpassed all others in the vehemence of his shouting when the king appeared on the deck. And when the great preacher and philan-

thropist had exhausted his strength and breath with his wild hurrahs, he turned to a friend who stood by his side and said—"Why don't you shout? You are not half boisterous enough."

Chalmers well knew that the private character of George the Fourth was very far from deserving respect or honor. It was the majesty of law, of government, of divine order represented in the sovereign that the great-hearted Scotsman honored. He felt that the wildest enthusiasm were becoming in the act of homage to the majesty that was ordained of God to keep the peace of the land and execute righteousness among the people.

So when the King of Zion came to his own city, and the multitude, with some vague and momentary impression of his greatness, went out to meet him, singing hosannas and waving palms and spreading their garments in the way, he would not rebuke their short-lived enthusiasm. He would not even say that it should be more subdued and thoughtful, more refined and decorous. Let them shout and let them sing, for no city ever had so much reason for joy as had Jerusalem when the multitudes on the highways and hill-sides, and in the valleys and streets and on the walls and housetops cried—"Hosanna, blessed is he that cometh in the name of the Lord. Peace in heaven and glory in the highest."

After the great excitement and publicity of the hosanna day, there was nothing more for Jesus to do but

to take the open and avowed course which he knew must bring him to the cross. He had for a time withdrawn from the public eye, and had kept himself out of the reach of those who were plotting together at Jerusalem to put him to death. But now his work of teaching is done, the evidence of his divine mission is complete, and he goes voluntarily to put himself in the way of his enemies, that their malice may become the instrument of completing the great sacrifice which had been appointed from before the foundation of the world.

Leaving the spot made memorable for all time, both by the tears and the triumph of the day, Jesus descends the western slope of Olivet, crosses the Kidron valley, and enters the eastern gate of the city in the midst of the hurrying and shouting multitude. He goes up and shows himself in the courts of the temple, looks round about upon all things within the enclosure of the holy house with that calm, searching, sorrowful look which always filled his enemies with awe and disarmed them of all power to do aught against him till his hour was come. Wherever he went, the singing and shouting multitude followed close upon his steps. The whole city was moved, and the vast area of the temple enclosure was filled with an ever-moving, surging mass of people, all struggling to get near enough to see the face and hear the words of the Prophet of Nazareth. The scribes read the law with none to listen, and the priests were left alone with the evening sacrifice. Everybody had joined the crowd that were surging to and fro in

the endeavor to see and to hear the one mysterious and mighty person who had actually raised the dead within a half hour's walk of the city.

Having looked around silently and significantly upon all things within the enclosure of the holy house, making the impression upon the leaders and rulers that some awful purpose lay hidden under his calm, sad look, he left the temple and the city and returned to Bethany for the night. The first decisive step towards the great sacrifice had been taken. He had shown himself the object of supreme interest to the multitude, and so had excited the envy and hatred of their customary leaders to the highest degree. He had come once more within their reach, and they were already intent upon new plans to destroy him. He would have them know that whenever they can muster courage enough to lay hands on him, they will not have to go far to find him, and the victim will be ready. It will take them yet four days more to complete their dark counsels, and when they demand his presence he will meet them face to face. The hesitancy and the irresolution are all on their side. He knows no fear. He takes no faltering step.

Monday he came back to the city, and made a still more striking exhibition of the power of his presence over hardened and brutal men. He commanded the market men and the money-changers who bought and sold within the enclosure of the temple, to leave the holy place and take their merchandise with them, and they went. Some, who were slow in their movement and

made excuses for delay, he drove out with a scourge, as one would drive cattle to the shambles. Hardened, selfish and calculating as they were, they could not understand the authority with which he spoke, or the look of command which they saw in his face. When he smote them hard with his scourge, they dared not strike back. When he said, "Take these things hence," they must needs obey.

The blind, the sick, and the lame were brought to him in great numbers, and he healed them. Everywhere in the crowd were men leaping, and shouting and rejoicing over recovery from some great life-long affliction, which had left them at one word from the lips of Jesus. Never had there been such joy in the courts of the holy house before. The populace at large had been induced by threats or persuasion to abate the shouting of the previous day, but nobody could restrain the lame, the blind and the deaf from manifesting their gratitude when they were healed. And the children kept up the songs and cries of the triumphal procession, and they sung all about the temple grounds, "Hosanna to the Son of David." When the priests and the scribes demanded his authority for what he did, he put them to shame before all the people by the wisdom of his reply. And so when the evening was come, he went back to Bethany, leaving the rulers still more enraged and intent upon compassing his death.

Tuesday he came again to the city, following the foot-worn path over Olivet, and showing himself again in the

midst of the multitude that thronged the temple area. This was the last day of public teaching, and the people were no more to hear from that voice which had so long been speaking to them from the hill-side and the lake shore, as well as in the synagogue and the temple, such gracious words as never man spoke. His enemies assailed him in greater numbers and with greater subtilty than ever before. When one was silenced, another would renew the assault, all alike endeavoring to ensnare him in his words, and to draw from him some expression which could be used as an accusation against him before the magistrates. But all in vain. They only induced him to set forth before all the people, by new parables and in a more awful light, the dreadful doom which they would bring on themselves, on the temple and the holy city, by rejecting their own Messiah.

The day wore on, and all the while the adversaries of Jesus grew more exasperating in their attacks, and more cunning and malignant in their hypocrisy, until at last he pronounced the most fearful woes upon the blind and bigoted leaders of the people in their presence and calling them by their chosen name, and then he left them. That was enough. The priests and scribes would now see to it that the dreaded voice of their Reprover shall not be heard in the courts of the temple or in the streets of the city any more. That very night the great council would meet in secret session at the palace of the high priest, and the betrayer would be there to bargain for the reward of iniquity, and to deliver Jesus into their hands.

On his way out to Bethany that evening, Jesus paused before passing the ridge of Olivet, and sat down with his disciples over against the temple to look back upon Jerusalem for the last time. The sun was setting, and the whole city, with the surrounding valleys and hill-sides alive with the camps of the pilgrims, lay beneath him, in the evening light. The history of a thousand years, the divine oracles speaking by a thousand voices, the monuments and the memories of prophets, patriarchs and kings, the visitations of angels, miraculous interpositions in judgment and in blessing, from the offering of Isaac to the time of the building of the temple, and the signs of his own coming, were all present to his mind as he looked down upon Moriah and Zion, and he heard the murmur and the evening songs of a million people gathered within and around the walls of the holy city.

Nowhere on the face of all the earth was it possible to find another scene of such commanding interest as that which lay before the eyes of Jesus when he turned to look upon Jerusalem that evening for the last time. It was not Egyptian Thebes, with its hundred gates, upon which he gazed. It was not great Babylon, with its vast extent and lofty walls. It was not Athens, with its wonders of art and its schools of philosophy. It was not mighty Rome, with its princes and people rioting upon the spoils of conquered nations. But it was the city from which was to go forth the law of a new life for the uplifting of the whole human race. It was the city to

which devout pilgrims should come in all time from the ends of the earth. It was the city which was soon to receive its last and most awful celebrity from the crucifixion of the Son of God. Surely in all the world on the evening of that day, there was not a scene more sadly suggestive than that of Jesus sitting upon the Mount of Olives and looking upon Jerusalem in the light of the setting sun for the last time.

And there he sat with his disciples till the sun went down and the stars came out, one by one, and the already risen moon grew bright over the mountains of Moab, and the lights were kindled up and down the hill-side in the camps of the pilgrim host. There he poured forth, in the most solemn and touching words, prophecy and warning and instruction concerning the coming desolation of Jerusalem, the dispersion of the Jewish people, the preaching of the gospel to all nations, and his own final coming to judge the world in righteousness. He closed this, the most awful and sublime of all his discourses, with the distinct and solemn declaration, that after two days he should be betrayed and crucified. Then he resumed his walk to Bethany and rested for the night.

The whole of the following day, Wednesday, he spent in retirement at his chosen and quiet home in Bethany. His public work was done, and while his enemies were completing their plans for his destruction, he would take a little time to gird up his soul for the trial of mockery and scourging, and for the crowning agony of the cross.

He would need the repose of two quiet days to prepare himself for the last sleepless night, and for the long torture of the last dreadful day. When he leaves the quiet village for the last time, on Thursday afternoon, he goes to be betrayed and crucified. His whole body and soul and spirit will be tasked with the most exhausting and unceasing intensity, until he bows his head in death at the ninth hour on Friday afternoon.

Jesus had told his disciples and his friends at Bethany what would be the end, and how soon it would come. But they believed it not. He was with them all Wednesday, just as sure in his own mind of going to the cross on Friday as if he were in prison, condemned to death, and the execution of the sentence had been set for that day. Yet he talks with those about him as he was wont to do, seriously, tenderly, yet not complainingly, not even asking for their sympathy, but always striving to prepare their hearts for the dark and terrible day when their dearest earthly hope would be crushed. He goes out, it may be, at night among the wild hills of the wilderness to be alone with his Father. He carries, it may be, a deeper shade of sorrow upon his face, an expression of weariness in waiting for the great hour of sacrifice to come. He seems more than usual perhaps as if he were bearing the elements of some mighty conflict within, and they were harder to master than the storms of the sea. His eye beams with such a deep and tender light, his voice thrills with such overpowering emotion, that all about him are moved to tears, or suppressed whispers of

wonder and intense feeling. But still there is no one with him in his deep and awful conflict. He must tread the wine-press of his mysterious agony alone. He must go to his death with none to hold his hand or strengthen his heart.

As the evening of Thursday draws near, Jesus sets forth upon his last walk over Olivet with his disciples before his passion. We do not know what words of farewell were spoken when he parted with his beloved friends at Bethany, they fondly hoping to see him return to lodge with them as before, and he well knowing that his next resting-place would be the grave. We are not told what he said to his disciples as he walked up the winding, stony path to the top of Olivet, or along the same descent where the multitude hailed his coming with loud hosannas four days before. We do not know whether in silence, or with weeping or with comforting words, he passed Gethsemane, and crossed the Kidron, and climbed up the steep ascent to the eastern gate of the city.

But from the moment of his arrival at the upper chamber in Jerusalem, where the passover was prepared, we are assured that his countenance wore an unwonted tenderness and solemnity, and that the wondering disciples saw the foreshadowing, signs of some mighty sorrow, some great and final agony upon him. The awful history of this last night and the following day will be studied with wonder and adoration by blessed angels and by redeemed men forever. We cannot

JESUS TEACHING THE DISCIPLES HUMILITY.

learn the simple story too well. We cannot recite the leading facts in the sacred record too often. It is worthy to be set forth with all the charm of music and all the fervor of prayer, and all the power of preaching in all languages, by all people and to the end of time.

Just about to complete his earthly humiliation, and to return to the throne of heaven with all power in his hands and all glory upon his head, Jesus teaches his disciples the greatness of humility. While they are contending with each other for the highest place in his promised kingdom, he girds himself as a servant and washes the feet of them who call him Lord. Just about to offer himself, the pure and spotless Lamb of God, in the great and only efficacious sacrifice for sin, he finishes the sacrifices of four thousand years by eating the Passover with his disciples. In place of the great national festival which the Jewish people had observed with costly rites and bloody sacrifices from the days of Moses, he institutes a single memorial service to be kept by his followers of every nation to the end of time.

As Jesus looks around upon the chosen company of his disciples, the dark shadow of coming treachery overclouds and troubles his soul. Groaning within himself and greatly troubled in spirit, he nerves himself at last to make the sad declaration—"Verily, verily, I say unto you, that one of you shall betray me." The disclosure makes the company of his fellow-disciples and the presence of the Master intolerable to the traitor. He goes immediately out, and it is night—night in the streets of

blinded and abandoned Jerusalem, night in the dark councils of the enemies of Jesus, night in the soul of the betrayer, night upon the path which he has chosen and must tread forever. Alas! how dark and terrible are both night and day to him who lifts his puny hand against the Light of the world and strives to put it out.

No sooner has the evil shadow of the traitor's presence left the room than the troubled cloud passes from the face of Jesus, and he turns to his remaining disciples, with the peace of heaven in his tone and the light of heaven in his look. And now he pours forth his soul in words of love, of counsel, and of prayer, which shall outlive the languages of earth, and shall be sung by blest voices to the harps of heaven. He himself joins with the disciples in singing the great hallelujah song with which Israel had closed the Passover for a thousand years: "Praise the Lord, all ye nations: praise him, all ye people; for his merciful kindness is great towards us; the truth of the Lord endureth forever. The Lord is my strength and song, and is become my salvation. Blessed be he that cometh in the name of the Lord."

From this glad song of praise and thanksgiving, from the calm and peaceful utterance of prayer and words of comfort for his disciples, Jesus goes out to his agony and his death. He knows where the betrayer will expect to find him at the midnight hour. Thither he makes his way, knowingly and willingly, that he may be ready when the officers and soldiers come with Judas for a guide to take him. No power on earth can subject

him to the suffering of death; but he offers himself that the world may know the love of the Father and the hardest heart may be touched by the voluntary sacrifice of the Son.

Once more through the silent street and out of the eastern gate and across the Kidron valley, beneath the shadows which the olive trees cast in the full moonlight, Jesus goes to his place of prayer, which is to him the place of agony and of bloody sweat, of strong crying and many tears. To this day, in spite of all the intervening changes of two thousand years, the scene can be identified with reasonable certainty, and it is the most solemn and affecting of all the "holy places" in Palestine. The aged olive trees, with gnarled and distorted trunks, appearing as if bent and twisted with the torture of centuries, are the most fitting monument, if anything be needed, to mark the sacred ground.

While waiting for the armed band to appear, Jesus is again troubled in spirit, and his soul is bowed down under the weight of a more awful and mysterious agony than had ever before come upon him. He is overwhelmed with a strange amazement, an inexplicable and shuddering dread, a horror of great darkness, an exceeding great sorrow, embittered with more than the bitterness of death. The sweat wrung out from the inward torture falls in bloody drops upon the ground. Thrice he prays in the same words that the cup may pass from him. And it seems a relief from something worse when the armed band appears, and he goes forth

to give himself up. His troubled countenance at once assumes so much of its serene and godlike majesty that the hardened soldiers are struck to the ground with awe before him. But the delay is only momentary. He offers himself again, and they bind him and lead him away.

So ends the last walk of Jesus with his disciples before his passion. They all forsake him and flee. Henceforth he goes as a prisoner, guarded and bound. He goes to be tried and condemned, to be mocked and scourged, to be crucified and buried. Henceforth he must go upon his way of sorrow alone, and of the people none shall be with him, and on the cross he must lift up the bitter cry as of one smitten and forsaken of God.

Via Dolorosa.

And they took Jesus, and led him away. And he bearing his cross went forth into a place called Golgotha.—JOHN xix. 16, 17.

XXII.

VIA DOLOROSA.

THERE is a street in modern Jerusalem named Via Dolorosa, the Sorrowful Way. Tradition says that along that street Jesus walked, bearing his cross from the blood-stained steps of Pilate's house to Calvary. Nevertheless in all Jerusalem, as we see it to-day, there is not one street that was trodden of men in the time of Christ. Every house was levelled with the ground, and every trace of the footway in the ancient city was blotted out in the great overthrow by the Roman legions. The bed of the street in which Jesus walked is buried under earth and ashes ten times deeper than the graves of the dead outside of the walls.

And besides the sorrowful way on which Jesus went to Calvary should begin at Gethsemane, when his disciples forsook him and fled, and it should take in all the weary distance which he walked on that dreadful night, and the more dreadful following day, until he was lifted up and the last act of the divine tragedy was complete in the cross. It is, in fact, all one mighty and awful drama, one mysterious and infinite passion, from the agony of tears and bloody sweat in the garden, to the bitter cry of desertion and the closing scene of darkness and death. The betrayal, the arrest, the arraignment,

the false accusation, the mockery, the denial, the scourging, the final sentence and its swift execution, must all unite to make up the meaning of that most sacred and awful mystery, the cup of sorrow which Jesus drank, the cross of death which Jesus bore.

Let us trace the steps of this meek and mighty Sufferer as he goes bleeding and bound along his sorrowful way from the garden of agony to the hill of Golgotha. It is past midnight when this last weary walk begins, and from this time forward the course of events in the awful history moves steadily on, giving the divine victim no rest till the closing scene on the cross.

First walking painfully with bound hands amid the rude and merciless mob, Jesus is hurried across the Kidron, and up the steep path through the city gate to the house of Annas. Not for a formal trial do they bring him there, but only that the old father-in-law of the high-priest, the man whose counsel is of the highest authority in the nation, may have the malicious satisfaction of seeing Jesus of Nazareth a prisoner. The multitude are glad to give him the pleasure, and to get words of praise from him because they have made the arrest at the midnight hour without breaking the peace of the city, and they mean to hold their victim fast until sentence of death is pronounced from Pilate's lips.

Thence out again into the night, finding their way through narrow, covered streets, and under arches by the

glare of lanterns and torches, and then in open spaces walking by the light of the full moon, they hurry their unresisting prisoner with insults and mockery onward to the palace of Caiaphas. Here he is questioned by the high priest, testified against by false witnesses, smitten by the officers, reviled by the whole assembly, condemned to death by the council, and still after the decision he is kept exposed to every form of insulting speech and personal abuse till the break of day. And while he is subjected to such mockery from his enemies, the heart of Jesus is pierced with a deeper pang by hearing his own honored and foremost disciple, Peter, deny, with bitter oaths and rude blasphemy, that he ever knew him.

The morning of Friday breaks, a day to be recorded as the greatest of all the days of time, a day to be commemorated long as angels shall desire to study the mystery of the sufferings of the Son of God, and the glory that should follow, long as redeemed men shall remember the sacrifice which purchased for them the inheritance of immortal life. The sentence of the Sanhedrim must now be confirmed and executed by the civil power, or it will be of no effect. And the enemies of Jesus hurry on their dreadful work with malignant and impetuous zeal, lest some turn of events should take him out of their hands and defeat their murderous design. They seized their unresisting prisoner at midnight in Gethsemane, without the city. When the morning has fully come and the sun is looking over the

ridge of Olivet into the deep valley of the Kidron, they have already led him to and fro through many streets, to four different palaces or tribunals, he has been twice arraigned before the high priests, twice before the Sanhedrim, he has been twice scourged, once robed in scarlet and crowned in mockery, everywhere beaten, buffeted, spit upon and condemned.

The whole process against Jesus was more like the disorderly doings of a mob than the solemn decisions of a magistrate. That which looks most like a show of law and order took place in the open court before the palace of the Roman Governor at an unusually early hour in the morning. That trial scene, if trial it may be called, was the most awful and extraordinary of all that we find recorded in the annals of all time. There never has been but one such trial in the whole history of time, and there never will be another long as the world shall stand. The participants in the transactions of that hour stand alone in the records of the past, with none to rival their distinction or to share their infamy. The tremendous import of their decision can be surpassed only by the interest of that day when the Son of man himself shall be seated on the throne of judgment, and before him shall be gathered all nations. The destiny of nations and ages was dependent upon the decision of that morning. No other human magistrate was ever called to pronounce sentence of acquittal or condemnation upon so illustrious a prisoner as the one who stood bound and accused before Pontius Pilate on that occasion.

And yet how unimposing the court, how disorderly the proceedings, how rash and hasty the decision! The judge before whom Jesus stands to be tried is a selfish and time-serving sceptic, to whom expediency is the highest law and circumstances the only god. The prosecutors and witnesses are a cruel and fanatical mob, who have been dragging Jesus through the streets, exposing him to insult and mockery ever since midnight, and they are so capricious in their feelings and their faith that they can shout hosannas and blasphemies in the same breath and for the same person. Their brutal passions are frenzied and set on fire by leaders more determined and malignant than themselves. The law by which the Prisoner is tried is foreign to the country in which he has always lived, and it imputes no crime to the conduct with which he is charged; the accusations are sustained by hearsay testimony and the idle talk of the town. Neither judge, prosecutors nor witnesses have any just idea of the awful transaction in which they are engaged.

The great masters in painting have made many attempts to reproduce the scene of Christ's arraignment before Pilate on that eventful morning, and to set it forth upon the canvas with all the effect which can be given by color and form and grouping. The most complete and successful of all these sacred compositions is by Benjamin West. His colossal painting embraces the widest range of character, and yet it is finished with conscientious accuracy in the most minute details. It adheres with sacred fidelity to the gospel history, and is

therefore wholly free from the extravagances and incongruities which often mar the compositions of the older masters. It sets the beholder in the midst of the scenes which the Evangelists describe, and it delivers silently such an effective sermon to the eye as few can preach to the ear. A momentary glance at the picture makes an impression which time can never efface. A more careful study brings out a sacred lesson from every figure and attitude and expression in the whole composition.

Our attention is drawn to a great and excited assemblage of people, in a public square, before the governor's palace, in the light of the early morning in the city of Jerusalem. Foremost of all is the figure of him whose presence alone attracts the crowd and gives distinction to the day. There he stands, radiant and serene, though scourged, thorn-crowned and covered with the mocking robe of kingly state. His very meekness is the expression of the most awful majesty, and his resignation is the hiding of infinite power. He stands alone, calm, self-possessed, in the midst of the frenzied and shouting multitude. The hatred of high priests and people breaks forth upon him in wild gestures and frantic cries of rage. But there is no expression of wrath or fear upon that calm, majestic, yet worn and sorrow-stricken face. Scoffed at, despised, the object of bitter scorn and biting satire, he looks upon his foes with the serenity of a mind at peace, and with the silence and reserve of conscious strength.

He knows that the most terrible and malignant passions are enlisted against him, and yet he betrays no anxiety about the issue of the trial. He is in no haste to reply or to contradict, however many and false the charges brought against him. He stands in his consciousness of innocence and of power with a composure as complete as if all the forces of nature and the fiercest tempests of human passion were subject to his word. It is not the manacle which holds his bound hands, but the voluntary restraint which he puts upon his own power. His crown of thorns shines with a glory more divine than the diadem of the Cæsars. He suffers, but he is above our pity. He is defenceless, and yet he has no need of others to plead his cause. He has only to speak the word, and legions of mighty angels will fly to his rescue. He has only to look upon his accusers with indignation, and they will wither before his glance as flax is consumed in the flame.

He seems like one whose triumph is already secure, whose work is done. No more shall he tread the rough paths of Palestine with weary feet. No more shall he seek the cold solitudes of the mountains to pray all night alone. He shall faint in the fiery heat of noon no more. He has left the green hills of Galilee and the streets of the lake-side towns where he taught for the last time. Never again will he tell the story of the heavenly kingdom at the table of the rich, never again will he come with healing and consolation to the homes of the poor. The afflicted will no longer be brought to

him in crowds to be cured. The blind by the wayside have lifted up their cry for mercy at the sound of his coming for the last time. He has rebuked the proud, he has reasoned with the sceptical, he has taught the ignorant, he has pitied the poor. And he has been met with opposition and denunciation, he has been repaid with scorn and scourging.

And now the last awful act in the divine tragedy draws near. He has only to confirm by his death all that he has done and taught in his life. He stands in his meekness and majesty a spectacle of awe and astonishment, the one infinite and eternal witness of truth and love to the world. His silence speaks with ten thousand tongues. His submission is the embodiment of resistless power. In his loneliness he can command infinite hosts. His rejection by priest and people, his condemnation by Jewish pride and Roman power, give him a new title to the crown of earth and heaven.

Before the divine prisoner, and between him and the accusing crowd of priests and people, stands the human judge, Pontius Pilate, the representative of the pride and power of world-conquering Rome. He stands forth as the embodiment of the highest earthly authority, the incarnation of that remorseless and victorious force which has trodden down the nations under the iron heel of war. The conquering legions march, and the idolatrous eagles spread their golden wings and stoop for their prey at his command. His brow is wreathed with

immortal bays in token of the perpetual triumph with which Rome goes forth among the nations conquering and to conquer. He wears the simple robe of a Roman senator, which, by seven centuries of conquest, has been made more august than the purple of kings. The instruments of torture are behind him and at his feet. He has only to speak the word, and the quivering flesh of any man in Jerusalem will be seamed and torn by the cruel rods. The cross will be set up at a sign from him, and the executioner will find the victim wherever the silent finger of Pilate points to the man.

This remorseless foreign ruler cares nothing for the faith or superstition of priests or people. The mumbling auguries of the Roman soothsayer and the holy sacrifices of the Jewish temple are all alike to him. He believes in nothing but worldly power. He is awed and dazzled only by success. There is nothing spiritual, imaginative, or ideal in his look. There is no gleam of pity, no susceptibility to sentiment in his stern, stony face. He has neither the lofty stoicism of Cato nor the indulgent compassion of Cæsar. There is indeed a slight trace of feeling in his cold, cruel eye. But the fire is kindled from beneath, and it burns in the baser elements of a nature that needs only the lowest temptations to make it bad. Sensuality mingles with force in his hard, pitiless gaze, and the two combined make him such a man as few would wish to have for a friend, none could safely have for a foe.

And yet this cold, pitiless, passionless Roman is

touched with a feeling of strange, indefinable awe in the presence of Jesus. He has never seen prisoners at his judgment seat, nor princes in the high court of kings, wear such a look of mingled meekness and majesty, submission and power, as sits enthroned upon the bleeding and thorn-crowned brow of the mysterious man against whom the surging crowd lift up the cry—"Away with him, crucify him." The hard, unsympathizing Roman is fascinated by the awful composure of that face which the rude hands of the mob have smitten and bruised with many blows. He is thrilled by the serious, tender tone of that voice which speaks with the calmness and self-possession of superior power, and which betrays no anxiety, no resentment under the railing accusations of the multitude. Pilate wonders what such a person can have done to provoke the outcry of the priests and the people. After three-fold examination, he is more and more convinced that there is something inexplicable and divine in the defenceless man whose calm words have a strange mastery over the proud Roman, and whose silent look penetrates his very soul. This feeling of awe and wonder with which Pilate regards Jesus is greatly deepened by a message received from his wife:—"Have thou nothing to do with that just person, for I have suffered many things this day in a dream because of him." She waits with anxious and tearful gaze to see what will be the end. Even the dissolute and mocking Herod regards the scene with a serious and thoughtful look. The royal profligate feels

for the moment how awful goodness is, and how fearful the fate of him who defies its power. The stern Roman tries to appear as if he did not care for the message from his wife, but he cannot forget that ominous dream.

Foremost of the clamorous mob that gather in the judgment hall of Pilate is the high priest of the Jews, lending the sanction of his sacred office to the arrest of Jesus, and taking the lead in the wild cry, "Away with him." He is clothed in the robes with which he ministers at the altar of Jehovah. He wears the jewelled breast-plate with which he enters the Holy Place of the temple. His forehead is adorned with the golden mitre, graven with the inscription—HOLINESS UNTO THE LORD. His loins are girt about with a golden girdle, and the white ephod betokens the purity of his office as the priest of the Most High. There he stands in golden vestments and "radiant Urim, divinely wrought," as the anointed of the Lord to lead the cry against God's well-beloved Son.

The malignant fire of fanaticism flames from his strained and deep-set eye. The low cunning of the conspirator and the remorseless hate of the bigot are written in every line of his sunken cheek and wrinkled brow. Envious because the people are intent to hear Jesus, he has determined that the voice of the Nazarene shall be lifted up in Jerusalem no more. He is ready to bring any kind of charge, to suborn any kind of testimony to gain his end. He will insist that the holy temple has been spoken against, God's name blas-

phemed, the majesty of Cæsar dishonored, the peace of the nation endangered—all falsehoods and contradictions in one breath, in order to bring the pitiless wrath of Rome upon one guiltless head. He is the representative of the most hateful and hopeless character to be found in all history, a bad man in a holy office, a malignant and narrow-minded bigot, perpetrating the most monstrous crimes under pretence of zeal for the glory of God and the good of man. He is the worse in his wickedness for the very reason that blind zeal urges him on, and perverted conscience approves what he does.

Behind him surges the excited crowd of priests and people, outrageous as a stormy sea. The younger faces gleam with the wild fire of kindled passion, and the older darken with deep and settled hate. Their voices rise in hoarse and clamorous dissonance, and their eyes flash with infernal flame. Any one who has seen the looks and gestures and heard the terrible outcries of an excited Oriental mob, can best imagine the frantic yells, the wild and frenzied gestures and expressions of the actors in the memorable scene before Pilate's house on that eventful morning. With uplifted hands and vehement outcries they demand the release of Barabbas, the robber and murderer, and the crucifixion of Christ. It matters nothing to them how many or how great the crimes of the wretch who receives a pardon from Pilate, if only he will pronounce sentence of condemnation upon Jesus.

The morning sun is high over Olivet, and the hot noon is coming on apace, and the merciless band of conspirators have been pursuing their innocent victim all night, as the wolf follows the prey. But now weariness and hunger have only made them more furious in their rage. They are the more eager and urgent for the sentence of death to be passed because they have set their hearts upon seeing the victim nailed to the cross, and upon mocking at his last, forsaken cry before the sun sets.

The soldiers are impatient to inflict the final scourging, and one approaches from behind to readjust the mocking robe. The hands of the lictor are clenched hard upon the blood-stained rods, and there is no pity in his cruel eye. The centurion leans upon his sword and waits for the decision with the composure of a man who is accustomed both to command and to obey. He sees something strangely beautiful and divine in the person and bearing of Jesus. And yet he is so completely subject to the iron discipline of military law that he waits only for a word from Pilate to mount and lead the way to Calvary. His calm, steady look and mail-clad form contrast strangely with a family group gathered about him, a mother whispering in the ear of her wondering boy, and idlers leaning carelessly upon his shield behind.

The spears and helmets of soldiers mingle with the innocent-looking faces of Pilate's own household, who have come out with the court of the palace to learn the

cause of the tumult. One heartless wretch pushes the mock sceptre of reed beneath the bound arms, and points his finger in scorn at the captive King. A group of common soldiers recline upon the pavement, impatient of delay, and fretting because they have been put upon duty so early in the day. Their rigid muscles are bare and brown, and every trace of humanity has been burnt out of their hard faces by the blasting fires of war. They form a fitting company for the still more heartless and horrible creature whose trade it is to nail men alive to the cross. He takes a fiendish pleasure in explaining the process of crucifixion with cold precision to the horror-stricken boys whose attention has been drawn to the hammer and the nails.

The pitiless walls and grated windows of a prison are in sight, a counterpart of the palace where princes live, and the covert of darkness where captives die. Within sight of all that is done and within hearing of all that is said, stands Barabbas, with bare shoulders and bound hands, looking out from beneath his brutal brow with high hope and fiendish joy, while an excited priest, with outstretched hands, clamors for the release of the robber and the condemnation of Jesus. Close behind, under guard and already condemned, are two thieves, who must go with Jesus to death, that the Holy One may be numbered with malefactors, and that the penitent may receive pardon and the promise of Paradise on the cross.

The friends of Jesus press into the open court and

come near to witness this last scene in the public life of their beloved Lord. But they are powerless and speechless. They can only weep and wring their hands in agony, while the tumultuous mockery of a trial goes on and the word of doom from Pilate's lips is yet unspoken. Mary is there, sharing the more than mortal woe of her divine Son. The beloved disciple supports the blessed mother, while the sword of sympathetic sorrow pierces both to the very soul. Mary Magdalene throws herself upon the cross that lies upon the ground in readiness for its victim. Her eyes are still fixed on Jesus, as if to say that in all his suffering she must bear a part. Around her gathers a bending group of women who ministered to Christ in their own homes and on his many journeys through the land. Their faces exhibit the deepest expressions of tenderness and pity, of sorrow and despair. Their helpless and hopeless aspect appears still more touching in contrast with the manly grief of the disciples, who mingle with the rude crowd behind the high priest. Joseph of Arimathea contemplates the scene with mute astonishment. The fiery-hearted James clasps his hands in agonizing prayer. The ever-foremost and impulsive Peter turns away, weeping bitterly and covering his face with his robe.

And all the while the one holy Personage whose presence makes the scene memorable for all time stands in calm, majestic silence, waiting for the word of death which he knows is sure to come. When reviled, he reviles not again. When smitten, he threatens not.

False witnesses rise up against him, speaking lies, but he opens not his mouth. Pilate expresses surprise at his silence, but he answers him never a word. With all the rage and blasphemy of the multitude to provoke, and all the power of Rome to terrify and torture him, he shows no sign of fear, anxiety or resentment. Let the smiters repeat their blows; he can bear them all. Let the word of doom come when it may; it will find him prepared. He is already conqueror by the divine right of self-denial. He only waits for the crowning of death to ascend his throne and reign in life forever. He recognizes the sign of his coming glory in the cry —Away with him! Crucify him!

To set forth the scene of Christ's rejection in all its sacred grandeur and tender simplicity before the eye, the art of the painter must become a religion, and he must lay his colors upon the canvas as reverently as he utters the words of prayer. When the devout artist so labors to illustrate the gospel story, he becomes a teacher and benefactor to millions, who desire to give form and life to the saints and heroes of ancient time and who have not the power to do so. West's colossal painting is a mighty scene which preaches to the eye as few voices can preach to the ear. And the engravings of the original picture, which have been made with wonderful accuracy, and multiplied by the thousand, are all commentaries which convey at a glance as much meaning as the most accomplished writer can put into whole chapters of studied composition.

The hours of the day move swiftly on, the greatest day in the history of time, and the last scene in the divine tragedy must be set forth for earth and heaven to see before nine o'clock in the morning. The meek and unresisting Sufferer has been treading his way of sorrow, unsupported and alone, from midnight to morning. He will have little strength left for the last great sacrifice of the cross if it does not come speedily. The people and the priests are becoming more vehement and frantic in their cries—Crucify him, crucify him. Pilate has already put himself to much more trouble than he is wont to do in the effort to rescue an innocent person from the hands of the mob. Fretted and impatient because he has been called out at so early an hour in the morning, and really not caring half as much for the life of any man as for his own momentary convenience, he at last says that the mob may have their own way. He cares little what they do with their prisoner, if they will stop their cries and give him no further trouble. He would give up any man in Jerusalem to the cross rather than lose his midday nap, or be called to judge the case at so early an hour in the morning.

And so Pilate speaks the word which sets his name highest on the roll of infamy for all ages. He pronounces a sentence such as never came from the lips of any other judge in all time. He dooms the world's best Benefactor to the worst form of death that cruel ingenuity ever invented. He says that in all the great Roman Empire there is no place for one whose only

crime was that he went about doing good. And yet even this hard and heartless man has been so impressed by the few words and the silent bearing of Jesus that he will not condemn such a prisoner without some sign that he acts under constraint, and he will not take the responsibility. He washes his hands before the multitude and he says, with a solemnity far from common with him, I am innocent of the blood of this just person; see ye to it. And then he puts upon his conscience the stains which not all the waters of the ocean can ever wash out. He delivers Jesus to be crucified.

The sentence of Pilate is received with a yell of demoniac exultation by the priests and the mob. Many of them have been up planning and executing their wickedness all night. They have wearied themselves with walking and shouting. They are hungry and thirsty. And yet they will give themselves no rest until they see their victim nailed to the cross. They will crowd the streets that go out of the city gates, they will run themselves out of breath to be first at the place of the crucifixion, and to secure a stand nearest to the soldiers while the dreadful work of nailing the victim and lifting the cross is done. There still they will repeat their coarse jests and heap insult and mockery upon him who will answer back only with the prayer—Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do. There they will sit in the hot sun and on the hard rocks for hours, with cruel satisfaction, watching the slow agony of the crucified, and waiting for death to come.

The centurion and the soldiers keeping guard in the court of Pilate's house hear the sentence pronounced upon Jesus, and they know well that theirs will be the task of executing the sentence without delay. They raise no question as to the guilt or the innocence of the condemned. Obedience is the first law of military service, and they never ask the reason why. A few quick, sharp words of command ring out in the court of the palace. They are distinctly heard above all the cries and the trampling of the multitude. The centurion mounts, and the clatter of his horse's hoofs upon the pavement causes the crowd to fall back and give room to prepare for the march to the place of crucifixion.

The soldiers gather about the condemned. Others are summoned from the garrison to form a sufficient guard against the populace. Coarse, cruel men, hardened by the cruel service of camp and field, and brutalized by the inhuman spirit of the age, they must add something to the mockeries which the priests and people have already put upon Jesus. It gratifies their low and depraved passions to call him a king in derision, and bow the knee before him and say—Hail—as if saluting a sovereign, and then rise and smite him on the head and spit upon him in contempt of his weakness. It was the spirit of the age to mock and torture the condemned in every possible way. The tender mercies of soldiers and executioners were cruelty, and the people looked on with frenzied delight whenever they had the opportunity to see bloodshed and agony.

But the time for such additional mockeries by the soldiers was short. The day was moving swiftly on and the sentence of Pilate must be carried into execution before the city became crowded with a million people from the camps outside of the walls, and the danger of a tumult would be greatly increased by the crowded state of the streets. For men used to obey and to work fast, a few moments were enough to make the preparations for the march, and the whole band, with the prisoner bearing his cross in the midst, and the centurion at the front, were on the way to the gate of the city.

The most memorable procession that ever moved on this earth, more significant than a Roman triumph, more sorrowful than the funeral cortege of kings and conquerors, was that in which Jesus was led from Pilate's house to Calvary to be crucified, amid the wail of the daughters of Jerusalem and the mockery of the multitude that clamored for his death. We cannot describe the sorrowful way along which the procession passed. We do not know where he turned to the great company that followed him, wailing and lamenting, and said—"Weep not for me, but for yourselves and for your children." We do not know where he fainted and fell beneath the weight of the cross, and the rude soldiers seized one who was passing by and laid the burden on him. Nobody can show the spot where the cross was set up or the grave where Jesus was buried. And it is best that it should be so. Else the spot might draw even spiritual worshippers from the ends of the earth to

itself, rather than to him by whose sufferings it was consecrated.

What we do know of the death of Christ is of far greater importance to us than the street along which he passed to Calvary, or the precise spot where the great sacrifice was made. If the material cross itself were actually found and miraculously multiplied, and one were set up as an object of reverence in every Christian sanctuary, it might only degrade our conceptions of the spiritual cross, and divert our trust from the living and immortal Christ himself to things that change and pass away.

Nevertheless it will do us all good frequently and solemnly to recall the closing scenes in the Saviour's earthly life. In all history there is no record of events from which has gone forth such mighty power to change and uplift the nations as that which is found by every thoughtful reader in the story of the cross. Amid all the material and worldly passions by which we are beset and tempted, we shall learn many salutary lessons by going back in memory and spending a thoughtful hour in the endeavor to strengthen our faith and quicken our love at the foot of the cross. The great theme of the divine Passion will never be exhausted, though studied ever so often and ever so long.

Jesus was rejected in Jerusalem that millions in many lands might receive him to their hearts. Jesus walked his sorrowful way from Gethsemane to Calvary in weariness and torture and blood, that he might offer rest to

all hearts, and happiness to all homes, and prosperity to all nations. He appeared before Pilate without form or comeliness, disrobed and mocked and marred by the lash of the bloody scourge and the blows of buffeting hands, that we might find in him the perfection of beauty, and that human character, might draw from him the grace of higher culture and the adornment of a meek and quiet spirit. Jesus was silent when bitter accusations were brought against him, that millions of tongues might be made eloquent in the utterance of truth, that the poor and afflicted might have mighty advocates to plead their cause before all the tribunals and assemblies of men, and that all the languages of the earth might be enriched with thoughts of beauty and words of peace. Jesus was crucified, dead and buried at Jerusalem, that the message of life might go out into all the earth, thrilling with the tenderness which touches the hardest heart, mighty with the power that casts down the thrones of darkness, and builds up the spiritual and immortal temple of a new life in the enlightened and redeemed soul.

Jesus is still on trial before the world. He claims the service of all hands and the homage of all hearts. That claim must be accepted or denied by all to whom it comes. Before all who read the story of his earthly life he stands in the meekness of a suppliant and in the majesty of a king. He has borne our sorrows and become acquainted with our grief. He would have us behold his glory and share his crown. He has come

down to walk with us through all the dark and dangerous paths which we have to tread. He would have us go up to walk with him in the light that never shone on earthly paths, beside living streams that never rise from earthly fountains. For our sake, Jesus has entered into conflict with the powers of death. Single-handed and alone he has met the king of terrors. He would write our names in his book of life. He would make us heirs of a blessed and glorious immortality. Every trait in the character, every act in the work, every expression in the spirit of Christ, is a yearning of infinite love to reclaim the wandering, a struggle of infinite power to save the lost. The mighty Helper groans and agonizes in the travail of his soul to draw men to God with bands of love. He would lift up the fallen with such tenderness and pity as a parent feels for a suffering child. Such is the VIA DOLOROSA of Jesus. Such is the way of divine sorrow and infinite pity on which the Son of the Father comes to win our hearts and lead us back to God.

Stabat Mater.

There stood by the cross of Jesus his mother.—JOHN xix. 25.

XXIII.

STABAT MATER.

THERE is an old Latin church hymn, written in the rhymed stanzas of the Middle Ages, depicting in mournful strains the sorrows of the mother of Jesus as she stood by his cross. The author was himself a man of many sorrows, and the wail which he poured out from his own stricken heart, in devout commemoration of Mary's greater grief, has been sung and chanted in the Roman Catholic service of Passion week for seven hundred years. The opening lines are familiar to many who think less of their meaning than of the music to which they have been set by many masters:

Stabat mater dolorosa
Juxta crucem lachrymosa,
Dum pendebat filius,
Cujus animam gementem,
Contristatam et dolentem,
Pertransivit gladius.

At the cross her station keeping,
Stood the mournful mother weeping,
Close to Jesus to the last.
Through her heart his sorrow sharing,
All his bitter anguish bearing,
Now at length the sword hath passed.

And that sacred song, pouring the burden of its sorrows through seven centuries of time, has led many other penitents to go by faith to the mount of the crucifixion, and stand with the weeping mother by the cross of Jesus mourning in sorrow for their own sins. The mistaken and self-torturing solitary has wrought himself up to a sacred frenzy of feeling while chanting the solemn strain

in his stony cell at midnight. Assembled thousands in the great cathedrals of the old world have swayed with emotion like waves of the sea when the mournful strains of the Stabat Mater resounded through the long-drawn aisle, rose to the height of fretted roof and lofty dome, and stirred the dust on the tombs of the mighty dead. The many-voiced organ has come to the help of the voices of men in giving utterance to the mournful mother's grief, and it has poured forth such a heart-breaking wail in the service of sorrow, that it would seem as if some stricken soul were imprisoned within its wilderness of pipes, and were praying in agony for rescue from the cruel hands of tormentors.

And yet all the meaning and power of this sacred poem, and of the mournful music to which it is sung, arise from the simple story of the evangelist, that the mother of Jesus stood by his cross witnessing his agony and waiting for the slow approach of death, till her own heart was pierced by that bitter cry which rent the earth and darkened the heavens and raised the dead.

Poets oft have sung her story,
Painters decked her brow with glory,
Priests her name have deified,
But no worship, song, or glory
Touches like the simple story,
Mary stood the cross beside.

It was simply as a woman and a mother that Mary followed Jesus to Calvary and wept at the foot of his cross. And the pen of the evangelist has preserved

AT THE CROSS HER STATION KEEPING.

the affecting record of this human sympathy, not to withdraw our devotion from the mighty Sufferer himself and fix our hearts in sentimental admiration upon a weeping woman, but to make the whole transaction of the crucifixion more real and human in appearance to the eye, more significant and divine in meaning to the mind.

We owe no worship to the mother of Jesus. It is not through her mediation that we approach the divine and eternal Son of the Father. She has no more power to help in time of need than any of the blessed who have passed into rest. She cannot hear the cry of those who call from the ends of the earth, and her compassion for the suffering is little compared with his who died that all might live. And yet we can learn much from her constancy and courage in standing by the cross. When his own disciples deserted him, when scoffing Jews joined with contemptuous heathen in pouring insult and mockery upon him in his dying hour, she continued faithful and affectionate to the last.

And this devotion of Mary is the more memorable because the gospels nowhere tell us that Jesus bestowed upon her any degree of honor or distinction above that which he conferred upon other devout women who ministered unto his necessities. Of the four times in which the sacred story tells us that Jesus spoke to his mother, or concerning his mother, three were instances in which he used words of restraint or rebuke, and in the other he spoke in pity, not in honor. When she found him in

the temple, sitting in the midst of the doctors, though himself still a child, and she spoke sharply and complainingly to him because he had not started in their company on the way homeward to Nazareth, he declared that his work in life was one in which she could have no share, and he must obey his Father's will without consulting her.

When the marriage feast was set forth in Cana, and Mary came to Jesus anxious and troubled because the entertainment for the many guests had come short, and she feared that the family of her friends would be dishonored by the seeming want of hospitality, he declared again in still stronger terms that there was nothing common between him and her in the divine work of his life. He could not admit her to his confidence nor act upon her suggestion. His hour was appointed by a higher than human choice, and he must take his own time and way of work, and she must wait like all others upon his will.

Once he was speaking to the people in a crowded house. The air was close and stifling, the room was dark, the people trod upon each other in their eagerness to hear. He had been speaking long, and it was only one of many days of continued toil in teaching and healing the sick, and the night had given him scarcely more rest than the day. Mary came with her motherly anxieties to the door, and tried in vain to enter, that she might remonstrate with him for his overwork. She said he was beside himself, and he must be restrained and

taken care of by his friends. When she could not make her way in through the crowd, she sent word from one to another through the mass of people, desiring some one who stood near to say to him that his mother was without and desired to speak with him. And the only heed he gave to the word was to stretch forth his hand towards his disciples and to say—Behold my mother and my brethren. He would have her and all others know that those who do the will of his Father are the nearest in relationship to him, and they may always speak with him, and their wishes he will always heed.

And again, on the cross, his last word to the mournful mother weeping at his feet was a word of pity, not a commission of authority or a sign of peculiar honor. He did not even call her by name, but commended her to the care of the beloved disciple as one especially in need herself, saying to her and to him—Woman, behold thy son; son, behold thy mother. Her sole distinction above all other women in that most sorrowful scene was to be named as chief mourner, more in need of pity and consolation than all others who wept by the cross. And so her name comes down to us in the gospel story, not as one to be prayed to, as if she could help all who are in distress, but as one to be regarded with deep tenderness and infinite pity. Three times in the sacred record her word comes to Jesus, and in each case it is gently yet firmly set aside as not worthy of his especial attention. Once and at last, when she stands silent and weeping by his cross, he speaks to her in infinite pity,

as if no woman's sorrow was like her sorrow, and no mother were ever so much in need of help and consolation from others as she.

The Romish Church, in its gross idealization of Mary's grief, hang pictures of the sorrowing mother upon the wall with swords piercing her heart. They represent the Man of sorrows himself with the thorn crown upon his head and blood upon his brow, and the five bleeding wounds of the cross in his side, his hands and his feet. The pictures of saints are most apt to set before us men worn with fasting, wild with anguish, bowed down with great sorrows, not daring to look upon God's beauty in the world nor even listening to the songs which God gives to trusting and waiting souls in the night.

And we are all doubtless led a little too much to make our religion a sorrow, forgetting that the Man of sorrows himself came to bring glad tidings of great joy unto all people. The sacred music which we are most apt to sing in our best moods is set to the key of the Stabat Mater rather than of the Gloria in Excelsis. In the lives of those who live nearest to the cross, it is easy to trace a tinge of sorrow. The most hopeful and successful workers for the salvation of the world have looked into the depths of the world's wickedness and woes, and their spirits have been saddened by the sight. They have gone forth to their fields of toil weeping, and they have watered the seed which they have sown with tears.

We all think of Paul as a man of a sad countenance. So we think of Moses and Samuel and Elijah. So of all the prophets and apostles and holy men who walked with God in other times. So of the martyrs and the missionaries, the self-denying and the faithful, who have surrendered most for Christ and who have done most for their fellow-men. We think of them as men walking in the shadow of a great sorrow, and bending under the weight of a great burden.

We somehow take it for granted that great and good purposes cannot dwell in the heart without lending a shade of melancholy to the outward aspect. An old revolutionary soldier, who had been body-guard to Washington, told me with tears in his eyes that the face of his great and beloved commander "was always solemn as eternity." The artist who was with the martyred President for many months in his gayest and happiest hours, said that his was the saddest face he ever painted. The cloud that overhung the nation never lifted its shadow from that rugged brow on which the light of humor only served to bring out the deeper shade. I met him once when the cloud above us all was darkest, and the whole land was shaking with its thunders. He received me with great cordiality, and I knew that my coming was no interruption, and that for a half hour he had nothing to do but to hear what I might say. But when I felt the grasp of his great hand and I looked up into his great, sorrow-stricken face, I could only say, "God bless you, Mr. Lincoln," and turn away to hide my tears.

In all acts of religious worship, in all preaching of the glad tidings of salvation, we are apt to attach most importance to words which move men to tears. In all our estimates of our own religious experience, we make a great deal of the fact that at some time we wept under the appeal which was made to our hearts from the cross of Christ or the claim of duty.

When a feeling of deep sadness is written upon every face in the sanctuary, and sighs and tears respond to the preacher's voice from the whole assembly, he feels that great good is done, and great blessings are about to be bestowed. When gay and thoughtless persons take to reading religious books for a time, they are apt to think they will get the most good from the saddest and the most depressing. If there were one chapter in the Bible which nobody could read without tears, I think that chapter would be read by all more frequently than any other. The hymns, the prayers, the exhortations which seem to break the hearts of all who listen are supposed to have most of the spirit of him who came to comfort all mourners, and to pour the oil of gladness into every stricken heart.

When a family has been deeply afflicted, or when a great public sorrow has fallen upon a whole community, and the minister of Christ stands up in the midst of the assembly to speak in words of Christian consolation, it is thought that he fulfils his office well if he so speaks that all who hear are dissolved in tears. If there were one preacher in this land who could make his whole

audience burst out in loud and passionate weeping every time he spoke from the pulpit, no house could be found in city or country large enough to hold the numbers that would throng to hear him. The vile, the thoughtless, and the profane would join with the devout and believing in seeking the sad luxury of tears. And all would go to their homes feeling that there were more hope for them because they had wept.

And I really suppose there would be. The man whose tender sensibilities cannot be touched by the most affecting exhibitions of the love of Christ in giving himself for our salvation, is in a very hopeless way indeed. If anything is fitted to make us weep, it must be the sight of the cross on which the Saviour dies that we may live. And it is perfectly natural that religious truth and religious exercises should awaken tender and sorrowful emotions, because they bring the infinite kindness and generosity of our heavenly Father into contrast with our ingratitude and folly.

Nevertheless these sorrowful emotions are hopeful and profitable only when they open the heart for the incoming of an exceeding great and lasting joy. There is no religion in sorrow unless it be such sorrow as leads to joy. Christ did not die on the cross to make men weep, but to make them shout and sing for gladness. The highest order of Christian experience manifests itself in joy and gratitude, not in weeping and lamentation. There is the most of heaven on earth, and God's kingdom has most fully come, not where men weep and

fast and mourn, but where they rejoice and are exceeding glad.

And so when we go back by faith and take our stand with the sorrowing mother at the foot of the cross, the first lesson which we learn from the sight of Jesus crucified is one that may well make us weep, but it is the beginning of a joy that is unspeakable and full of glory. And that is the lesson of penitence for our sins. It is for us that Christ is lifted up, and on him is laid the burden of our iniquities. It is to save us from shame and everlasting contempt that he consents to have the scorn and mockery of the world heaped on him. It is the thick cloud of our transgressions that brings darkness and the sense of desertion upon his soul, and extorts from him the cry as of one smitten and forsaken of God. He is put to grief, and he carries the weight of infinite sorrow that he may pour the oil of gladness into our bleeding hearts, and that God's own hand may wipe away all tears from our eyes forever. He consents to be numbered with transgressors, and to make his soul an offering for sin that we may be justified before God, and that all our wanderings may be healed, and we may be restored to our Father's house and find rest and peace forever.

And if anything can move our hearts to penitence for our sins it must be this great sight, the Son of God seen by faith, lifted up on the cross, suffering that we may rejoice, treated as a transgressor that we may be made righteous, dying that we live with him and be alive for-

evermore. Everything that is generous, noble, manly in our nature, must move us to sorrow for all our misdoings when we see how much an infinitely generous and holy Saviour is willing to suffer for our sake.

Sometimes it is enough to break the hard heart of a wicked son when he sees an affectionate and faithful mother mourning over his misconduct, bowed down with grief for the shame and ruin which he brings on himself. He knows that it is only from generous and self-sacrificing love for him that his mother's heart bleeds. And it makes him seem to himself worse than a brute to be insensible while she is so deeply moved in his behalf. The only tie that has saved many a son from profligacy and destruction has been the bond of love which has bound him to a mother's heart.

And the love of Jesus is infinitely more generous, patient and self-denying than a mother's love. He has been more deeply afflicted by our ingratitude and disobedience than any mother ever was by the misconduct of her child. He has longed and labored for our rescue more earnestly than any human parent ever did for the welfare of an only son. And who would not mourn and be in bitterness of soul for his sins when he sees them laid upon the holy Son of God, and the meek and mighty sufferer is crushed to the grave by the load? When reason fails to convince, when warning and invitation have been heard in vain, when chastisement and blessing have been equally slighted, when the hope of heaven no longer allures and the fear of hell no longer alarms,

then still may the infinite generosity of Jesus in suffering for sinners touch the heart and unseal the fountain of tears.

As we stand and gaze by faith on the cross of Jesus, every expression of his agonized countenance, every drop of blood flowing from his many wounds, every convulsion with which the torture of crucifixion shakes his frame, every groan which the hiding of his Father's face extorts from his troubled soul, seems to say to us—"It is for thee that these pangs are borne. It is that thou mayest be treated as innocent that I consent to have all shame and crime laid on me. It is to blot out the dark record of thy iniquity that my blood is shed. The grave shall close over me with its horror of great darkness that I may spoil the dominions of death and unbar the gates of life for thee. I submit to all this shame and agony because I have loved thee with an everlasting love, and I could not rest till I had brought back thy wayward and wandering soul to God."

With such tender entreaty will the cross of Christ plead with every one of us against our sins the moment we actually believe that he died for us. And when we desire deeper conviction, when we wish to be more penitent, and we wonder that we have so little sorrow for our sins, then we must come nearer to the cross. We must consider more earnestly the throne and the glory, the life and the death, the justice and the mercy that so meet and harmonize in the cross that God is just and the guilty are forgiven. Jesus dies and sinners

live. Shame is poured upon the Son of the Highest, and the ransomed soul is crowned with eternal glory.

But to learn this lesson to any purpose we must consider that this unresisting, uncomplaining victim is in very deed the Son of God. He could summon legions of mighty angels to his help with a word. He could doom all his enemies to destruction in a moment. He could make all the powers and terrors of the universe swift ministers to execute his vengeance while his wrath is kindled but a little. This is he whose throne is from everlasting, and whose kingdom shall have no end. The darkened heavens, the quaking earth, and the rising dead attest the divinity which man denies. And yet he gives himself as a lamb to the slaughter. When reviled he threatens not. When accused by false witnesses he opens not his mouth. On the cross itself he prays for those who nailed him there. Cruel Roman and scoffing Jew unite to torture his life and to dishonor his death. And yet he gives himself to be smitten and scorned without a murmuring word.

Come, then, ye proud and vain-glorious, who are ever panting for some petty distinction above your fellow-men, estimate the value of the highest earthly honor while seeing the Son of God rejected and despised for your sake. Come, ye rich, and take account of all your perishable possessions in sight of that blood which was shed as a ransom for your souls. Come, ye complainers and murmurers, who are ever at conflict with the ways of divine providence and the will of your fellow-men,

repeat the tale of your wrongs and sufferings within hearing of the voice which prays for revilers and murderers—"Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do." Come, ye passionate and contentious, whose anger kindles with provocation as the flax kindles in the flame, see with what unmurmuring meekness the Son of God endures the contradiction of sinners, and learn from him to pour contempt on all your pride. Come, ye poor and needy, who are tempted to envy the rich and to think that every earthly blessing can be bought with money, see to what a depth of destitution Christ submits for your sake, and learn from him to prize above all earthly possessions the inheritance of life which he makes himself poor to purchase and freely give to you.

And if we are ever to subdue the pride and vanity of our hearts, if we are ever to bring ourselves into familiar and holy converse with things unseen and eternal, we must learn to estimate all human interests in the light which shines from the cross. We must fathom the depths of the humiliation to which the Son of God submitted that he might raise us up from our fallen state. We must consider how great was the sacrifice which he must needs make in his own person to bring back our wandering souls to his Father's house. We must lay open our hearts to the mighty constraint of that love which could come forth from the throne of heaven, and search through all the wastes of sin and misery to recover the lost. While thus looking with

penitence and trust upon him whom our sins have pierced and our sorrows have touched, we shall acquire strength to overcome the world, we shall have patience and courage to endure to the end and win the crown of life.

If it were not for the cross we should not know our Father in heaven. We should not dare to call ourselves children of the Most High. We should not venture to ascribe to the supreme and eternal Judge the relentings and compassions of an earthly parent's heart. Our present life would be a pitiless and hopeless orphanage, and the hour of death would be the beginning of endless despair.

But when we see the glory of the eternal Father shining in the face of the divine and eternal Son, we are attracted by infinite grace and benignity, and we rejoice in the accents of paternal love. We believe that the infinite One pities our infirmities as a human father pities his own children. We have a Father to love us with infinite and everlasting love, to draw us to himself with more than a mother's yearning toward a wayward child. It is only when we come near the cross of Jesus that we see the infinite Creator and Governor of the universe manifesting such paternal tenderness and condescension towards us. Every pang, every degree of shame that the holy and divine Redeemer suffers for our sake teaches us better than a thousand arguments that God is love, that he loves even us, and that he has given his Son for our salvation with a father's affectionate

and self-forgetting generosity. This is the great revelation of the cross, the holy and the mighty God, the Maker of all worlds, and the absolute Arbiter of all destinies, revealed as a compassionate and forgiving Father.

This knowledge of our Father in heaven is worth infinitely more to us than anything that the schools of philosophy can teach about force or law, or the eternal necessities of things. We see only one side of the character of God when we contemplate his greatness, his justice, his truth. His greatness might not condescend to our feebleness, and then we should be desolate and helpless. His power might crush us as we tread by accident or design upon a worm in the dust, and then we are ruined. His justice is terrible to us because we have violated its demands. His truth exposes our guilt and puts us to shame forever.

But when we look to the crucified One of Calvary for that which we need to know first and most of God, when we study the divine character in the light of the cross, we see mercy, tenderness and forgiveness blending harmoniously with the awful attributes of holiness, justice and power, and then we find a Father in him of whom our sins made us afraid. Instead of fleeing from him or trying to hide ourselves from his eye, we turn to him in love. We seek his sympathy in all our grief, and his protection in every danger. The throne that was high and terrible to us in our unbelief becomes beautiful and wondrously attractive when we behold in

the midst of it One bearing the signs of having suffered for our sake. We hide ourselves beneath its shadow when we fear the fury of the storm and we dread the coming of the night.

This is the most glorious revelation of the infinite God which shows us the face of our Father full of benignity and tenderness, drawing us to himself with bands of love. This is the most excellent knowledge of Jesus Christ which shows us the depths of sin in our own hearts, and at the same time permits us to see the writing of the finger of God upon the sentence of our condemnation—"Live, O penitent and believing souls, for I have found a ransom!" The deep and angry darkness which overhung our future pathway is transfigured and changed to glory in the light of revealed love. We see the shining domes and the sapphire walls of the heavenly city outlined upon the horizon where the sun of this earthly life goes down. The infinite gulf of perdition is bridged over by the cross, and redeemed souls pass in safety, with songs and everlasting joy. We join the glorious company, and thenceforth the journey of life is only a return to our Father's house.

Everything great and awful in the character of God puts on an aspect of beauty and attraction when we see his glory as it shines in the face of Jesus Christ. We are earnest and thoughtful, and yet we rejoice and are exceeding glad. We have a contest to wage and a crown to win, but we sing our triumph as we go, and peace is in our hearts while we fight. The great inher-

itance of the future is an infinite compensation for all the losses and afflictions of this present time. We ask no greater pledge of our Father's love than the gift of his Son. We cannot be told more plainly of his willingness to give us all things. And if some gifts seem to make us poor for the time, we can take everything with gratitude from the hand that for our sake was nailed to the cross. We can trust everything to that love which could die that we might live.

This great mystery of the cross warrants us in waiting for the explanation of all other mysteries that trouble us most, and it is itself dark only from excess of light. We hesitate to accept it only because it means so much. In our poor worldly way of judging we are apt to think it too good to be true. And yet it is true just because it is so good, and it is just like our Father to give his best, his infinite best, to his children. It puts all our proud theories of law and of love to shame. And yet it draws and persuades, and it commands with the mightiest force to a holy and happy life. When once we have learned to look upon Christ as he is, the brightness of the Father's glory, we find that it is the most rational faith to believe in him, the safest path to follow him, the joy of life to work for him, and better than life to die in the hope of the glory to be revealed in him.

It is only when we look to the cross that we learn the true value and greatness of man. Philosophy in its loftiest range, imagination in its utmost flight cannot lift man to such a degree of glory and exaltation as the

feeblest and lowest attain by faith in Christ as the resurrection and the life. When once we accept Jesus as the incarnate Son of the Highest, submitting to the cross for our salvation, we can make no estimate of the value of the soul, we can set no limit to the capacity of man for blessedness and honor in the endless life to come. This infinite and awful sacrifice of Calvary could be offered only for the redemption of a soul that is infinitely precious. The great, creating Father, infinitely rich as he is in all the resources of wisdom and power, would not give his only-begotten Son to death unless the sacrifice were attended with a compensation that would fill the universe with praise and endure throughout all ages. The Redeemer himself could not be satisfied with the travail of his soul in suffering for sinners unless the fruit of his conflict with the powers of darkness would be glory and joy to countless millions, world without end.

The infinite price at which God estimates the value of one human soul is best seen in the greatness of the ransom paid for our redemption. If we possessed the treasures and revenues of empire, if we could command the riches and glories of the whole earth, it would be infinite gain to sacrifice them all for the inheritance of life which has been purchased for us by the blood of the cross. There was but one being in the universe great and mighty enough to bestow the title to that high estate upon the poor and the unworthy, and he could do it only by making his own soul an offering for sin.

We often hear it asked how much a man is worth,

To answer that question we must go to Calvary. In the mystery and glory of the cross we can best learn the price at which the all-knowing One estimates the value of man, any man, the poorest and the lowliest on earth, for it was for such that the great sacrifice of the cross was made. How much is a man worth? I will tell you when you estimate for me the height of that glory from which Christ came down to die that man might be saved. I will tell you when you have told me how many worlds are upheld by the power of him who cried in agony upon the cross, "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?" I will tell you when you have counted for me the everlasting years during which Christ had reigned above all thrones and powers when he bowed his head in death and said, "It is finished."

I will tell you how much the poorest and most unfriended man in all the world is worth when you have measured for me the height and length and breadth and depth of the love of Christ displayed in man's redemption; when you have heard every voice and measured the joy of every heart that shall sing the song of redemption forever and ever; when you have estimated the flood of glory and gladness that shall be poured upon the universe of immortal beings by the redeeming work of Christ in the endless ages to come; when you have comprehended the infinite joy with which the Redeemer himself rejoices over the salvation of the lost; when you have done all this I will tell you how much the poorest man on earth is worth.

And I should need to have all these estimates made for me, and I should need the ability to comprehend the infinite result before I could tell how many and strong are the reasons why every one should trust in Christ for the attainment of such exceeding great and freely offered salvation. No process of reasoning, no fervor of appeal, no cry of alarm, no earnestness of entreaty can show the worth or need of salvation in so clear a light as it is seen by one believing look at the cross, one distinct and full recognition of the incarnate Son of God in the crucified one of Calvary. And there is nothing on earth more sorrowful than the conduct of men who are anxious to secure trifling and perishable possessions, yet are indifferent to the great estate of life which Christ offers, grateful for a momentary attention from a human friend, yet insensible to the infinite generosity of the Son of God in dying for their salvation.

As I go back in imagination to the scene of the great sacrifice, and mingle in the company that stand by the cross to gaze, methinks I hear the voice of some one spectator, more thoughtful and attentive than the rest, saying—"Is this in very deed the Son of God? And is it for me that he suffers and dies this awful death? And does he endure all this just because he desires to save me from all guilt and shame, and to make me honored and blessed forever? Then the homage of my heart and the service of my hands shall be his forever. All that I have and am is too little to give to one who so loved me as to give himself, his whole divine, eternal

self for me. I cannot trust such a Friend too much, I cannot give myself to his service with too deep a devotion. I cannot decline the gift of life, I cannot refuse to be made happy, I cannot put aside the crown of glory when to gain all this I have only to yield to the bands of love and gratitude which draw me to Christ and make me his forever."

Take the cross from Christianity and it is as if the sun were taken from the day and the stars from the night. Without the cross we have no Father in heaven to draw us to him with the relentings and compassions of a parental heart, we have no inheritance of everlasting life made sure for our possession when the frail bark of our suffering mortality is wrecked upon the shores of time; we have no mansions of rest, offering repose to the weary soul when the toil and the conflict of this earthly life are done. Without the cross there is no Friend of sinners on earth, and no Lamb in the midst of the throne of heaven, no welcome for the prodigal who would return to his father's house, no robe of honor for any who have lost the high estate of innocence and peace.

The cross alone can give us hope and victory in the last and utmost trial. The subtleties of philosophy, the refinements of taste, the difficulties of scepticism, the seductions of pleasure become empty dreams or idle mockeries to him who is looking upon the world for the last time, and who is soon to know by experience the awful secret of death and eternity. Yet even then the

way before him shall be full of light, and he shall advance with the step of a conqueror if he can see the cross of Christ uplifted on the distant heights and shining through the gloom.

On a summer's day, in the hottest month in the year, I was climbing the mountain wall which separates the Canton Vallais from Uri in Switzerland. There was no house, no human form, no voice of man or beast to relieve the awful desolation around me. Nothing broke the deep silence save the roar of the torrents in the distance below and the occasional rush of sliding snows from the heights above. The pine groves and the green pastures where the shepherds kept their flocks were far beneath. In every direction the blue dome of the sky rested upon icy peaks and walls of gleaming snow. In every direction the prospect closed with scenes of the most sublime and horrible desolation.

Weary, panting for breath in the thin air, heated with toil, and yet chilled with blasts that swept from the winter's eternal throne, I paused many times to rest from exhaustion. Many times I looked back towards the green valley where the "arrowy Rhone" rushed forth, a strong river from beneath the melting glacier. Many times I gazed upward to the cold height which seemed to lift itself away into the clouds as fast as I labored up the steep, while every fibre of my weary frame protested that I could climb no higher. Many times I thought how fearful a thing it would be to fall

down and die there alone. Many times I feared that it had been an act of rashness in me, unused as I was to mountain climbing, to attempt the ascent without a guide to show the way or a friend to help in case of need. At last I saw before me, and but a few steps further on, a CROSS, a high, firm, broad cross, standing amid desolate rocks and wintry snows, and I knew that when I reached that cross there would be no other height to climb, and beyond there would be a descending and easy path to beautiful vales and laughing streams and the cheerful homes of men.

At the sight of that cross, standing amid clouds and snow to mark the utmost height of the pass, I felt something of the enthusiasm with which the Romish devotee clasps and kisses the symbol of the world's redemption. And as I passed leisurely and joyously on in my subsequent journey, I thought many times to myself—O, how hard it is to climb the cold and weary mountains which sin and unbelief have raised up between us and the blessed cross of Christ! How determined and persevering must be our choice and our effort if we would ever reach it! And when we look back, how inviting the beautiful vales of ease and self-indulgence appear in the distance!

But once reach the cross, and the great joy begins, the great conflict ends. At the foot of the cross the penitent and believing soul has reached the highest elevation above all the foes of his peace, and from thence

he looks forth, a king and a conqueror, upon a subject world. The devotees of earthly pleasure have no joy, the sons of fame no triumph, to be compared with that which fills the weary and burdened sinner's heart when he looks for the first time in faith upon the cross of Christ.

After His Passion.

He showed himself alive after his passion, by many infallible proofs, being seen of them forty days, and speaking of the things pertaining to the kingdom of God.—ACTS i. 3.

XXIV.

AFTER HIS PASSION.

WE are prone to think of the life beyond death as a thing apart from our real selves, a bodiless dream, a wandering thought, a spiritual essence too subtle and ethereal to retain any personal character, or to abide in any one place, or to pursue any definite occupation. And so poets speak of the parting soul as losing each human trace, surrendering up its individual being, going to mix forever with the elements. So, too, philosophers frame theories of the other life as a loss of all personality, the return of an embodied force to the source from whence it sprang, the absorption of the individual soul in the one infinite soul of the universe. So Eastern sages have sat in silence in the sun or in the shade of the palm and dreamed day and night of a life in which all desire and growth and action shall cease forever, a life without love, a mind without thought, a soul without feeling or purpose, without hope or fear, nothing but endless existence and perfect rest.

One grand purpose of the teaching of Jesus, and especially of his several appearances to his disciples after his resurrection, was to show them beyond all question the real and positive character, the complete and exalted personality of the life after death. He did so not simply

by saying what is true, but by showing himself in his known and living person as the embodiment of the truth which he would teach. He was himself a representative of the life beyond death. They had only to look to him and they would see the kind of life into which they themselves would enter when their turn came to pass the gate of death.

When Jesus rose from the dead he set the seal of truth and reality to all the acts and instructions, to all the deeds and doctrines of his earthly life. He brought his whole work and mission within the range of things that can be judged and appreciated by the most literal and matter-of-fact minds. The last crowning miracle confirmed all the rest. And it did more: when Jesus showed himself to his disciples after he had passed through the dread mystery of death, he taught them by the reality of his own person that the other life is as real as this. They had no doubt about the reality of the life he had lived with them for years. They had seen it with their eyes and felt its power in their hearts. They had no doubt about the reality of the death he had died on the cross. They had witnessed his agony, and heard his last cry, and carried his cold, dead body to the tomb. The one other fact which they needed to know and believe to complete the eternal triad of Christian faith was the reality of Christ's life after death, and the like reality of the life which should be theirs through faith in him beyond death. And this last great fact Jesus taught when he showed himself to them alive after his passion

by many infallible proofs, and in ways best fitted to comfort their hearts and confirm their faith.

It will be a fitting close to all we have said in this book about the earthly days of the Son of Man if we glance at the varied times and circumstances in which Jesus appeared to his disciples after his resurrection. We shall thus see him showing the same interest in them personally, the same attachment to the old places of resort, the same willingness to be their guide and companion, in the house and the highway, on the mountain and by the sea, after he had passed the gate of death and had become a portion of the other life.

Jesus appeared first after his resurrection just where we would expect to see him if he retained his own peculiar, human personality, if he were the same in his feelings, impressions and associations after he had passed through the dread experience of death. He shows himself first in the garden of the sepulchre, at the door of the tomb, where his body had rested unto the third day in the clear light of the morning, and with a look as fresh as the day. He shows himself unto his most intimate friends, who had come there at that early hour to mourn and to pay the last tribute of affection to the beloved dead. They would be most sure to know him. They would be most gladdened by seeing him alive. It would do most to comfort their hearts and confirm their faith if they were to meet him in the midst of the very scenes where they had witnessed his suffering and death, at the door of the very tomb where they had buried his dead

body with many tears. If, after death, he were just the same in heart, in all human feeling that he was before, it would give him most satisfaction to meet his friends first after his resurrection on that very spot, at that early hour, when they came in grief and despair to anoint his body and to perform the last sad rites of affection for the beloved dead.

The garden of the tomb was just under the hill of the cross. The ground all about the base of the bare, stony mound on which the crucifixion took place still bore the marks of having been trampled by the multitude that came out of the city to gaze on the great tragedy till the sun was hidden, and then groped about in the darkness to find their way home. It was but a little way from the city wall, and the sentinel in the tower over the gate could look into the open door of the tomb, and see all that went and came through the gate of the garden. The three crosses were still standing, bare and blood-stained, in the morning sun, and the fresh earth and loose stones which had been thrown out by the soldiers in setting them up, were scattered over the surface of the hill. Here and there a shepherd or a vinedresser was making his way along the white paths which were crowded with thousands of people the third day before, when they saw, coming out of the gate of the city, at nine o'clock, the saddest procession that ever moved on the face of the earth, with Jesus in the midst bearing his cross.

But a few rods from the garden gate was the spot

where the centurion stood and gave command to the soldiers, and where he remained watching and waiting for the slow approach of death, until he heard the cry—It is finished, and the earth trembled beneath him, and he, stout-hearted Roman as he was, feared greatly, and said to those standing with him—Truly, this was the Son of God. A little farther off was the high place where the women that followed Jesus from Galilee, wept and wailed and cried out in despair. Near by were the old olive trees, in the shade of which stood the chief priests and scribes, mocking the mighty Sufferer in his agony, and saying—He saved others: himself he cannot save. Let him now come down from the cross, and we will believe him. On the crown of the hill, in the hot sun, not a spear's length from the foot of the cross, crouched the soldiers with their cruel game, casting lots for the garments of the crucified.

All these were in sight of the garden of the tomb. If Jesus were to show himself alive anywhere in the world, to prove his triumph over death, in no place could he more fittingly make his first appearance than in the midst of the very scenes where he had been mocked and tortured and put to death. And there was no better hour for him to appear than at the rising of the sun, when the shadows of night and uncertainty were past, and the world was awaking to the gladness and activity of the new day. Then the minds of witnesses would be best able to judge calmly and truly of what they saw. Then they would be least likely to be carried away by ghostly fears or spectres of the imagination.

And there came the friends of Jesus early in the morning, with their faculties all quickened by the rest of the night, and their affections all fixed upon their crucified Lord. And they found the stone rolled away from the door of the tomb, and the shelf of rock within, on which they had laid the body of Jesus two nights before, was empty. The grave clothes were carefully folded and laid in order, as if for the inspection of any visitors that might come. There were no signs of haste, of violence or of robbery. The empty tomb was like the sleeping chamber which the occupant sets in order before leaving in the morning.

And there in the garden, in the clear light of the risen sun, Mary Magdalene thought she saw a stranger. She was excited and troubled, and she looked at him with her face half veiled, all the while wiping away her tears. But she was not terrified. The person that she saw seemed to her so quiet, so much at home in the place, that she thought he must be the keeper of the garden. She saw nothing in him strange, unearthly, superhuman. He did not seem to her at all as she supposed one who had passed through death would look. She cast her eye searchingly, wonderingly about, as if looking for one she could not find. And the stranger kindly asked the cause of her weeping and the object of her search. But when he spoke his voice was quiet, kindly, altogether human, not ghostly, sepulchral, terrifying, as she supposed would be the voice of one speaking from the dead. She answered him as she would answer any one

whom she might meet for a moment by the way. She had no suspicion that she was talking with one who had passed through the awful mystery of death, and who was even then a part of the spiritual and eternal world. She had no thought that in that quiet and courteous stranger she saw one whose life was beyond death, and who in his sympathizing tone and pleasing address represented to her that unseen world on which she had been accustomed to look with dread and horror.

Suddenly she heard her name called by the stranger. It was the same voice which asked the cause of her weeping, yet not now to her the same. There never had been but one voice in the world which could say, "Mary," like that. And it all flashed upon her in a moment. It was Jesus himself. He had risen from the dead. She would have cast herself at his feet and kissed the wounds of the cross with the fervor of unutterable love and joy. But he says again in the same old tone of tenderness and command which nothing could resist—Go tell my brethren. Death had not broken the bonds of affection which bound them to his heart. Mary had seen the Lord alive in the very place where they had all wept over him dead. She must go first and tell them, that their hearts, too, might have rest and joy. He could have gone himself quicker than she, and he could have told of his resurrection better. But by sending Mary he showed himself to be the same that he was when he sent his disciples to preach to others, and he began in the garden of the sepulchre the witness and

ministry of his word by human lips, which is to continue through all time.

The first appearance of Jesus after death showed him to be the same Master, speaking, commanding, loving, just as he did before his dead body was laid in the tomb and his spirit passed into Paradise. In that garden of the tomb, on that resurrection morning, in the clear light of day, earth and heaven, time and eternity, the seen and the unseen world met, and were so blended into one that human eyes could not see the dividing line. The one, whose life was already beyond death, seemed as much a part of earth and humanity as those who had never passed over the border. It was an earthly garden, and one standing in it looking as if his daily work were to train vines and gather grapes. And yet his home was already in Paradise, and his presence there in human form did not take from him his blessed life. It was a human voice that spoke, and yet the Speaker was one whom angels heard and the heavens obeyed. So did Jesus by his resurrection bring the unseen and spiritual world into the every-day life of this. So did he teach us to live as if those who have passed from our view under the shadow of death may still be within the hearing of our voice and the reach of our hand.

The distance from the garden of the sepulchre to the city gate was but a few minutes' walk. The path was over ground frequented by great multitudes of people during the week of the Passover. There were camps of pilgrims everywhere, and the ground outside of the

walls was as public as the streets in the city, and as open to the light of day as the hill-sides on which the morning sun was shining in the fulness of his strength. Over such ground and along a path so frequented by pilgrims and people women were hurrying, filled with fear and great joy, speaking to none whom they met, yet talking with suppressed voices of the message which they had received from the angel at the tomb.

Suddenly they saw Jesus himself coming towards them in the same path, walking just as he walked before his feet were nailed to the cross. The blood-stain was gone from his brow and the expression of agony from his face. But it was the same look. He spoke, and it was the same voice which so long they had loved to hear. No reasonings nor terrors nor tortures could thenceforth compel those women to say they had not seen Jesus after he had passed through death. They were just as sure of having met him walking in the way as they were of remembering the long, dark hours when they watched him hanging on the cross. He gave them the common word of salutation which they had heard so many times before from his lips. He spoke kindly, tenderly, as he always did, and they knew it could be no other voice than his. But it seemed to them so awful to be standing in the presence of one who had just come out of the unseen world, they were so overpowered by his gentle and commanding majesty that they fell at his feet in the act of silent worship.

And yet he tells them not to fear. He is still to

them as he has ever been. They shall all see him again in the midst of the scenes where they first heard his voice and forsook all to follow him. They must go back to the hill country of Galilee, where they had their home, and where he had so often taught all day in the towns, and prayed all night on the mountains. He had not forgotten his old walks by the sea, nor the lonely high places of the hills, where he often went at the going down of the sun to meet his Father. It will be better for them to go back to their homes in the north, and there they shall see his face on the mountain apart from the noise of the city and the busy life by the sea, and then they will be glad.

On the same day, before the going down of the sun, Jesus appeared to Peter, whose last words in the presence of his Master before the crucifixion were words of cursing and of denial that he had ever known the Nazarene. In the morning the ever-foremost disciple had run to the sepulchre and found it empty, and then had gone back, silent and sorrowing, to his home. And I imagine he must have been in some secret chamber weeping bitterly in remembrance of the pitying look which Jesus turned upon him on the night of the denial, and that there the risen Lord manifested himself unto his heart-broken disciple to save him from utter despair. The angel at the tomb in the morning had kindly sent an especial word to Peter, lest he should think that after his denial of Jesus he could be no longer meant in messages to the disciples. And now, before the day was

done, the Lord showed himself to Peter in private to confirm the angel's word. So far as we know, Peter never told what Jesus said to him at that first interview after the sad night of the denial. But they must have been very tender and sacred words, even unspeakable words, such as Paul heard in Paradise, if such an impulsive and talkative person as Peter would never allow himself to utter them. He kept them in his heart, and pondered their meaning as he did the words heard on the holy mount of the transfiguration. And when he was an old man and shortly to put off this tabernacle, it gave him faith and courage for the hour of martyrdom when he remembered what Jesus said to him in private on the day of the resurrection.

The great day of new life to the world was moving on towards its close. The tomb under the hill of the cross was empty. The risen Lord had been seen three times already, and yet the disciples were confused, troubled, and almost in despair. They did not dare to believe what was told them by the women whom Jesus had met in the way. Peter was so silent and reserved that they distrusted even his testimony, although he said solemnly and repeatedly that he had seen the Lord. He was so apt to talk much and loud, that now, when his words were few and he often sat alone, silent and weeping, they were afraid there was some mistake, and they did not dare to believe in the actual rising from the dead.

In that state of mind two of the number went to spend

the night with friends in a village two hours' walk away from the city in the country. All the way they could think and talk of nothing else than the things which had happened unto them and their Lord in Jerusalem. And while they were talking sadly and weeping as they went, a stranger drew near and joined them in their walk and took the words from their lips while they were speaking. He did not seem intrusive, and yet he made no apology for interrupting them, and from the moment of joining them he made himself the leading speaker of the three. He came up so quietly, he introduced himself so courteously, he went on to speak in a way so clear and easy and earnest that they did not look at him carefully to see who he was. They somehow thought they had seen him before, and that in a moment they would recall his name and so save themselves the embarrassment of asking who he was.

The city was overcrowded with people during the week of the great national festival. Multitudes were coming and going in every direction. Everything was free and open. Strangers were accustomed to meet and talk with each other without introduction, and often they seemed in a little time like old acquaintances. And so the two in this case went on listening to the fervent words of their new companion, and they soon forgot that he was any stranger at all. There was something in his manner of walking which reminded them of a once familiar step, something in his tone of voice which led them to ask themselves where they had heard it be-

fore, something in the gesture of his hand as he spoke which they had been unconsciously imitating when talking with each other. And yet they were so absorbed with attention to his words that they could have little thought for the question who he was.

The red glow of the sunlight was gone from the tops of the hills, and the evening shadows were settling down into the narrow valleys. When they reached the village whither they were going, the stranger made as if he would bid them good-by and pass on. But they could not think of permitting so pleasant a companion, so earnest and interesting a talker to leave them at that late hour. It was all a matter of course that they should show the courtesy of inviting him to spend the night with them. So they said—Abide with us, for it is towards evening, and the day is far spent. He seemed so familiar, so kindly, so much like an old acquaintance, that they could not let him go on to the next town. He must turn in and tarry all night, and when the morning breaks he shall go on his way with the double blessing of the two hearts which had burned with the sacred fire of his words as they walked.

So the stranger passed in as a guest, and nobody in the house saw anything in his appearance to awaken fear or suspicion at his coming. He made himself so much at ease, so much at home, that nobody asked who he was or why he came. He knew all about the house and the ways of living, he adapted himself so easily to the place and the people, that it seemed as if

he had been there a hundred times and that everybody knew him. When the evening meal of barley cakes and olives was ready and they were all seated on the floor to eat, he took the thin sheets of bread in his hands and blessed them, and then broke and distributed to the company as if he were the master of the house. Then for the first time it flashed upon the minds of the disciples that it was Jesus. When their heads were bowed low and they heard the words of blessing, they knew that it could be no other voice than his. When they took the bread from his hands they saw what they had not seen before, the scar of the cross. They looked at each other to express their mutual joy at the great discovery, and when they turned again to see the face of their Master, he was gone. The door of the room had not been opened, there had been no sound of a departing step. But the divine guest was gone.

And those two men sat there in the house at evening listening to the words of one whose life was beyond death, whose person was a part of the spiritual world. And yet they saw nothing ghostly in the appearance of their guest. They heard nothing sepulchral or unearthly in his voice. He seemed as easy, natural and homelike as themselves. They would have been terrified beyond expression if they had known that they were talking with one who had risen from the dead to die no more, and who even then was living in the mysterious state beyond the grave. Those two men had walked for miles over the stony path from Jerusalem in

company with one who seemed to walk just as they did, taking as many steps, moving as cautiously over the stones, choosing the easiest path where there were many, stopping to drink from the spring that gushed by the hill-side, and all the while they did not know that they were in company with one who had just returned from Paradise, and who had come back to show them how easy it is to go, and how near is that other side, and how much like this to those who live for God in both.

That very night the eleven disciples and others with them were gathered in the large upper room at Jerusalem, where they had kept the last Passover with Jesus. There he had commanded them to keep another feast, simpler in form and deeper in meaning, as a remembrance of him for all time. There they had listened sadly and tearfully to his parting words, and bowed their heads to receive the blessing of his last prayer. From thence they had followed him to Gethsemane and to Calvary, to the cross and the tomb. There they had gathered again to talk over the strange history of the three days, and to help each other decide what was to be believed and what was next to be done.

They were asking Peter to tell them again for the hundredth time how, and when, and where it was that he had seen the Lord. Did he know for certain that it was Jesus? Had he not been wearied and worn out with sleeplessness and watching? Had he not been heart-broken and almost crazed with the remembrance of the look which Jesus turned on him in the hall of denial?

And might it not be that his overwrought mind would dwell on the image of that face till he would seem to see it before him when alone in his chamber?

Peter would only say sadly yet very earnestly that he could not be mistaken. He had surely seen Jesus alive, and the words which Jesus had spoken to him had healed the deep wound of his heart. He would not say what those words were. They were for him alone. But they all might be assured that they were such words as Jesus only could speak. But some doubted Peter's testimony, although he gave it so earnestly. They said it might be only a trance, a waking dream, an impression upon his excited and troubled mind. Neither were they any more ready to trust the testimony of the women who were early at the sepulchre, and who said they had met Jesus in the way. They were too much exhausted with weeping and watching to judge calmly and truly of what they had seen. And so for the most part they said they must have something more positive and reliable before they would know what to believe.

Just then the two who had walked to Emmaus burst into the room, heated with running and rapid walking, feverish with excitement and yet fearfully in earnest. And they told the story of the afternoon walk and the evening meal. Some thought it mysterious that they could walk so long with Jesus and think him to be a stranger, and then at last recognize him in a moment as their nearest and best friend. Still they doubted, and when they had heard all, the unuttered sigh was in every

heart—O, that Jesus himself would now appear, that we might see him with our own eyes and believe.

And as every heart was moved with the same sigh, Jesus himself stood in the midst of them. It was the same form which they had carried weeping to the tomb, the same face which had looked on them in pity from the cross. Speaking with that same voice which they had so often heard, and which heard once could never be forgotten, he said just as he used to say—"Peace be unto you." Their wish to see him then and there had been granted before they could put it into words. And yet they trembled and turned pale with terror. They now distrusted their own senses as much as they did the testimony of those who said they had seen Jesus before. They thought it a ghost, a creation of the overheated brain. Or if it were in very deed a real messenger from the unseen world, they thought it a summons to prepare for their own death, and a sign that they would soon be with the departed. All their impressions about the other life beyond this led them to think that it would be appalling to be brought face to face with one from the other world. Even if their beloved Lord should come back to them, they supposed that it would be in the ghastliness of death, and with such an expression of pain and sorrow that, if they should see his face, they could never smile again.

And yet Jesus stood in the midst of them with the same pure, serene, commanding presence which awed and yet attracted all hearts. The door of the room had not

been opened. There had been no sound of entering steps. He seemed to be there without coming, and only a veil had been lifted from their eyes that they might see him. He was there to satisfy them beyond all doubt or question that now, having passed through death, and having become an inhabitant of the spiritual world, he was still himself, just what they had seen and known him to be for years. He was there to show them in his own person, by his own kindly look and assuring voice that out of the unseen world comes, not terror, but peace, to those who walk with God. He was there to show them that the life beyond death, the identity and personal characteristics of the departed are as real, can be as easily known and recognized, as the life of this present world.

And so Jesus charged the company in that upper room at Jerusalem on the night after his resurrection to come near him, to lay their hands upon him, to examine the print of the nails in his hands and feet, and the gash of the spear in his side, that they might have no lingering doubt as to the identity of his person and the reality of his resurrection from the dead. In that moment of wonder and of joy, he would have them see in himself the embodiment of those truths which they were to preach in his name to the nations. To see him and to know him in his resurrection life was to know and believe the one truth on which the whole story of the gospel rests for its confirmation.

The one thing which they needed first to know was the

fact that he had risen from the dead, and that after death he was to them just as real, personal and friendly as he had been before. Knowing that, they could easily believe all his words. And, therefore, he would have them subject the proof of his resurrection to the test which is most relied upon by material, practical, matter-of-fact minds, the test of the senses. He would have them be very careful, deliberate and thorough in examining his body, in listening to his voice, in studying his looks, manner and personal appearance, so that they could ever afterwards say without hesitation or qualification—We know whom we have believed. We testify to what we have seen and heard. It is impossible for us to doubt that Christ rose from the dead. For we saw him with our eyes, we heard him with our ears, we touched him with our hands.

The one great, crowning truth of the resurrection of Christ would be most questioned, most denied. It would come most into conflict with the common impressions and experiences of men. And the disciples must needs bear witness to its reality with such strong, clear, consistent testimony that the world could not gainsay or resist their words. They must go forth prepared to preach a religion of reality, not simply of impressions, visions, ecstasies. They must confirm their testimony by such evidence as would satisfy candid, thoughtful, discriminating minds. They were to invite every man to examine and decide for himself whether the story of the gospel were true, reasonable and worthy of all accept-

ation. In preaching Christ to the world, they were to unfold and defend a system of truth which is confirmed by all our best faculties of judging, knowing, believing anything.

When Jesus appeared to his disciples in the upper chamber at Jerusalem the night after his resurrection, he was there to teach them that the life after death is as real, personal, palpable as this which we now live. He was there to set before them not a system, but a person, not a legend, but a life, not an argument, but another step in his own history. He stood in the midst of the company as their day's man, their mediator between the seen and the unseen, time and eternity, the material form and the spiritual life. His history of earth had mingled with theirs and touched their individual experience at every point, and made him one with them in the most actual, material, matter-of-fact life. And he would show them that same life of the body, glorified in the life of the spirit, that they might believe in both.

They had no doubt about the reality of the life of the body which they were then living. Jesus had taken all its conditions and limitations upon himself that he might mediate for them between that and the higher life of the spirit. He had passed from one to the other, showing himself to be the same person in both. He had taken to himself a mortal body, and carried it through all the experiences and exposures of their daily life; he had given it up to death, and then taken it again that he might show them how safe and direct and easy is

the passage from one to the other to those who follow him. He went and came between death and life that he might show how sure and swift is the process by which this mortal in its redeemed life can put on immortality.

Jesus did for his disciples and for us all as shepherds do in Eastern lands when persuading their flocks to cross a dark and rapid stream. They cross themselves, and come back and cross again in sight of the flock, and then even the lambs are not afraid to follow. The great Shepherd crossed the dark stream of death, and came back to tell his disciples that the footing is firm to all who follow his steps. That night Jesus stood before his disciples in his own person, bearing a part both in the material and the spiritual world, that he might help them to believe in one as truly as in the other. He would confirm their faith in the reality of the other life by such evidences as we rely upon when judging of things that we can see and touch and weigh and measure with our senses. He showed the reality of his bodily life by taking food and eating before them. He showed the reality of his spiritual life by vanishing out of their sight without waiting for any to unbar the door.

And the religion which is preached in the name of Jesus unto the nations, and which rests for its confirmation upon the reality of the resurrection, is itself a religion of reality. Its original witnesses did not follow cunningly devised fables. It is not now dependent for its confirmation upon the impressions or experiences of

any peculiarly constituted mind. It is a presence which can be felt, a power the effects of which can be seen and studied as easily as we can see and study the stars in the heavens and the stones on the earth.

The religion of Jesus changes character, and renews life, and beautifies the world. It changes the wilderness to a populous city, and makes the waste place a garden, and fills the dark homes of millions with joy. It makes the false man true, the passionate man meek and gentle, the hard and cruel man tender-hearted and pitiful, the selfish and miserly man generous and charitable, the profane man reverent and pure in heart and life, the worldly and prayerless man penitent and spiritual and God-fearing. It finds a man who is proud, fretful, passionate, quick in quarrel, fierce in contention, implacable in revenge. It makes him gentle, patient, forgiving. It gives him such mastery over himself that when reviled he reviles not again; when he suffers, he threatens not. He wears upon his countenance the expression of peace. When he speaks the law of kindness is upon his lips, and his words of love are mightier than the words of wrath. The change wrought in the spirit and character of the man is as evident and real as the change which comes over the body in passing from sickness to health, from youth to age, from sleep to waking. Shall we not believe in the reality of a religion which has done all this for millions, and which can do as much for millions more?

Years ago I went down to the Atlantic coast where a

wild and rugged promontory pushed out a mile's length into the sea. It was little else than a bleak and barren ridge of rock and shell and sand. The cold wind of the east swept over it with the chill of death in its blast. The waves dashed and thundered against it night and day, like the charging battalions of a mighty host. The storms of winter and summer swept the bare rock and blew the barren sand and pounded the hard beach as if all the elements had conspired to make that promontory a lifeless waste. There was no flower or tree or garden or green field to diversify the aspect of desolation. The sea-bird screamed, and the night-wind moaned, and the beacon shed its warning light to save the mariner from wreck on those wild rocks.

Years afterwards I went again to the same coast, and that rocky promontory was a blooming garden. The air was perfumed with flowers. The moan of the sea mingled with the murmur of bees and the song of birds. The branches of trees waved, and the tendrils of vines were burdened with fruit. Little children were playing in the sunshine, and the open door of a cottage home invited me in. An old man, with silvery hair and quiet step, was looking dreamily upon the scene of life and beauty, as if it reminded him of the everlasting gardens beyond the dim sea of time, where he should soon walk in immortal youth amid never-withering flowers.

And should I not believe in the reality of the power, the taste, the skill, the wealth, the toil, the perseverance which had changed that barren waste into a blooming

garden? While every sense of my body, and every faculty of my mind testified to the greatness of the change, should I, as a rational, thinking man, stand aside and say—It may be all a dream, a delusion, a passing impression upon a sensitive mind? No man in his senses could say that of a change which had cost years of study and toil and hundreds of thousands of dollars, and had transformed a rocky waste into a blooming garden. With just as little reason can we deny the reality and the new-creating power of a religion which works mightier changes in immortal man himself than man's most ingenious toil works in nature.

I visited a house where want and woe were constant guests. The father of the family was a drunkard. The mother was his partner in sin and misery. The children were haggard and hungry. The broken windows and battered walls, the littered floor and fireless hearth, the soiled bedding and wretched rooms, told a tale of degradation and despair which could never be put into words.

Again, years afterwards, I visited the same house, and all was changed. There was order and taste and beauty in the gravelled walk, the freshly-trimmed grass, the trailing vines and the blooming flowers about the door. There was peace and comfort and happiness within. The carpeted floor and the cushioned chairs and the pictures on the walls were in keeping with the seemly dress, the quiet deportment, and the cheerful looks of parents and children in rooms that before were so wretched and bare. It was the same house, the same

family, and yet, comparing one visit with the other, seemed like passing from the prison of despair to the gardens of Paradise.

What mighty power had made that wondrous change? It was the gospel of Jesus Christ. The father of that family had become a Christian. The mother of those children had learned to lead them to Jesus and to ask his blessing. The lips that were once loud with cursing and blasphemy had learned to sing in praise and plead in prayer. The spirit which had cast out the torturing demon from that house, and made it the home of peace and the vestibule of heaven, was the spirit of Jesus.

And shall we not believe in the reality of a religion which displays such mighty power? Not all the armies and revenues of nations could have done for that family what had been done for them by faith in him who stood alive, serene and beautiful after death in the midst of his friends at Jerusalem, and said—Peace be unto you. Are we not warranted as reasonable men in holding up our hand before heaven and before all the world, and saying—I stake my dearest hope for time and eternity upon the truthfulness, the reality and the power of a religion which makes wretched hearts happy, and sad homes cheerful, and death-beds triumphant?

Seven days and nights the disciples met as they went and came about Jerusalem. Always and everywhere they talked of what Jesus said to them when they saw him in the upper chamber the night after his resurrec-

tion. Over and over again they repeated to each other what all knew equally well—how serene and kindly he looked, how gently and tenderly he spoke, how intent he was to make every one feel the grasp of his hand and see the signs of the cross. But one of their number was not there that night, and he said many times over and with great vehemence, that he never would believe their testimony. He was sure there was some mistake about it. No such thing as they reported could ever take place. It was contrary to nature and experience; it was entirely out of the range of reason and faith, that one who had been crucified, pierced to the heart with a spear, carried dead to the grave, and left there until the third day, should come forth again alive. He would not take such a thing as that on anybody's testimony. He must see it himself or never believe.

When the evening of the second Christian Sabbath came, the disciples were together again as on the first, and Thomas, the doubter, was there—honest, earnest, wishing to know what to believe and why, and yet as determined as ever not to take the testimony of his brethren. Then and there again he began to protest that he would never be satisfied unless he could see Jesus with his own eyes. But he stops with the sentence half-spoken, for, behold, Jesus himself is before him! He stretches out his hand with the scarred palm, he lays bare his side to show the thrust of the soldier's spear. He calls Thomas by name, and with such rebuke for his unbelief as love can give. All overcome with

DOUBTING THOMAS CONVINCED.

the sight of his Master and the sound of his voice, the doubting disciple falls prostrate in the act of worship, and exclaims with a bursting heart—My Lord, and my God. He thinks himself blessed because he has been permitted to see his risen Lord, and thus to have the testimony of his own eyes to dismiss his doubts and confirm his faith. But Jesus tells him that more blessed are they—the number now so great that no man can count them—who have not seen and yet have believed.

Henceforth there are no more night appearances of the risen Lord. All are of the morning and the day. One is by the sea of Galilee when the flush of dawn is bright on the hills, and the fishermen are coming in from their night-toil on the water. One boat has seven of the disciples on board, and a stranger is waiting their approach on the shore. He calls to know what success has attended their night of toil, and they tell him that they have taken nothing. He says—Cast the net on the right side of the ship where ye are, and ye shall find. The draught taken is so great that they see at once who has given the word. It is Jesus himself on the shore. He has passed through death and he is living in the spiritual world, and yet he comes back to the place of his old walks by the sea, and he shows himself to be still interested in the homely trade of fishermen. He makes himself known to these humble toilers on the lake, that their testimony to the reality of his resurrection may go out through all the earth, and that all laborers on the

world's great sea of work and mystery and sorrow may look through the light of the morning and see Jesus on the shore.

Again, there is a gathering of more than five hundred of the disciples on a mountain in Galilee. We know not the name of the high place. We should be glad to find it the same as the mount of the Transfiguration. It would be in keeping with the ever-growing interest of the gospel story if Jesus should show himself in his glorious resurrection body to a great company of his followers on the very height where Moses and Elijah met him before his Passion, and he permitted his indwelling glory to shine out for three of his disciples to see. Then he charged them to tell the vision to no man till he was risen from the dead. Now he appears to the five hundred, that they may tell it to everybody, and that all men who have not seen may yet hear and believe.

Again, it is the morning hour, and the landscape such as the sun looks upon nowhere else in all his course. Far away northward, the snow of Hermon shines white and cold, and the cedar tops of Lebanon are purple and crimson in the glory of the coming day. Westward the Great Sea breaks in silvery ripples on the shore. Southwest waves the wooded Carmel, and south the mountains of Ephraim and Manasseh lift up their strength to keep watch and ward over Sharon and Jezreel. Away east, under the rising sun, blue and beautiful in the distance, roll, wave on wave, the oak-crowned heights

and lofty plains of Gilead and Bashan, and beyond lies the pathless wilderness where countless herds of camels stray and the wandering Arabs pitch their tents.

Nearer lies the populous landscape of Galilee, with a hundred cities set on hills in sight, and a thousand villages hanging on the slopes and clustered in the valleys. The smoke of the morning fires ascends slowly in the still air, and the hills echo with the cry of shepherds leading forth their flocks. The little sea of Galilee lies low and quiet in its deep bed, as if still waiting for the day, looking up to the calm heavens with placid gaze, as the blessed dead look from the shroud when the sunlight falls upon their face for the last time. The little cities about the lake are alive with busy thousands waking to the toil and the pleasure of the day. There is not breeze enough to rustle the foliage of the olive orchards and turn their silvery sheen to the sun. The fig and the vine hide the brown earth and the bare rocks with dark green, and make the country look like a garden. The stubble-fields where the barley has been reaped, and the wheat-fields where the grain is still standing, contrast with the fresh appearance of groves and gardens, and give variety and beauty to the whole landscape.

Over all these hills, through all these valleys, in all these cities and villages, on all sides of this inland sea, has Jesus been in the days of his ministry, healing the sick, comforting the afflicted, preaching the gospel. He

knows all the paths and the highways among the hills, and all the trades and occupations of the people. He has been entertained in the marble mansion of the rich and in the mud cabin of the poor. He has slept in houses without a floor and under a roofing of earth. And he has passed the night alone on the mountains with a roofing of sky and stars. He has climbed the steep places with weary step in the hot sun, and he has walked on the waves in the black night and in the face of the wild storm.

On this mountain height, which we may venture to presume was once illumined with the glory of the Transfiguration, in the clear, natural, perfect light of this calm June morning, in the midst of this most living landscape, every feature of which is a reflection of the gospel story, the disciples are gathered in great numbers, and they are waiting to see their Lord. It is the only especial appointment which he had made to meet them after his resurrection, and their expectations are raised to the highest pitch. Will he appear again as the favored three saw him in garments whiter than snow, and so effulgent with light that they cannot look upon him? Will the blessed come down from their high seats in bliss and talk with him in their presence of the decease which he has now accomplished at Jerusalem? Nay, rather, will not a multitude of the angel host that sung over Bethlehem at his birth come down to sing again in louder strains, now that his mission is accomplished and his triumph won?

But see, there is one in the midst of the company whom nobody knows, a stranger of gentle bearing and commanding aspect. How comes he there uninvited? Why should one with such a kindly look and noble presence intrude himself upon a scene which is sacred to the friends of Jesus alone? But look again. It is Jesus himself. Their minds are so occupied with thoughts of some awful and glorious manifestation that they do not at first recognize their Lord in one so quiet, so natural, so human, so like themselves. But now the whisper runs from lip to lip—It is the Lord, it is the Lord. And they bow their heads in worship.

And yet even in the act of worship the hearts of some were saying—Can this be he that hung on the cross? This the body that was laid in the grave? And is it by him that the thrones of darkness shall be cast down and the kingdom of righteousness established forever? But when they lifted up their heads they saw the majesty of the king where before they had only seen the form of a servant. They felt a new and divine power inspiring and energizing every faculty of their being when they heard him say—All power is given unto me in heaven and in earth. Go ye, therefore, and make disciples of all nations. Lo, I am with you always, even unto the end.

It was the last appearance of Jesus in Galilee. His final charge to his disciples was the greatest commission ever given to man in this world. He gave it in the midst of the scenes where he had taught and toiled for

years, in sight of the places where he had healed the sick, and hushed the storm, and raised the dead. He gave it on a high place apart from the hurry and conflict of life, and yet not so far away as to be out of sympathy with the toiling and suffering, beyond the cry of the poor and needy. That commission has been carried by the best and bravest for eighteen hundred years, and it is still the last and best hope of the world.

The last thing that Jesus did in company with his disciples before his passion was to walk with them from the chamber of the supper to the garden of his agony. The last thing that he did in their company before his ascension was to walk with them from Jerusalem where he had been crucified to Bethany, where he had raised the dead. In his resurrection life he went and came with the quickness of light. Barred doors could not shut him in or out. He was not subject to the limitations which he had voluntarily borne in the days of his ministry. And yet he loved to walk with his disciples upon the old familiar paths, just to show them that even when they saw him not he would be the same Companion in the way that he had ever been.

And so the last visible act of the risen Lord was to walk with his disciples slowly, quietly, that they might hear his words all the way, down into the Kidron, past Gethsemane, where he had so often been, up the steeps of Olivet, over towards the mountain village where he received his last lodgment for the night. And this last walk, too, it would seem, was in the morning, in the

brightness of the new day. The murmur of the city died away behind them as they passed over the ridge of Olivet, bent around a curve of the hills and came out upon the slope above Bethany. The little stone hamlet was just below them, with the empty tomb where Lazarus had been buried, and the gladdened house where he had come back from the dead to live in his new lease of life. The pathway to Jericho which Jesus had so often trod was in sight, winding down eastward through the wilderness. The sun was shining in the full glory of the East. The green orchards and vineyards about Bethany and the stony waste beyond stood out in the clear, sharp lines of a most real and familiar landscape.

Jesus stops in his walk and casts his eye with an unusually tender and penetrating look upon the face of every one of his disciples as they gather close about him. He lifts up his hands as he was wont to do in blessing, and they bow their heads in reverence while he speaks the words. When they lift up their eyes again to look upon the face of their Master, he is gone. They hear no sound of rushing winds, they see no chariot of fire, only an ascending gleam of light in the sky and they are alone. Two men in shining garments stand by them for a moment to say that Jesus shall come again as he went, and when he shall appear they shall be made like him, and he will come to receive them unto himself, that where he is there they may be also, and they may both see and share his glory. Their next walk with

him shall be in shining garments, such as angels wear, in the streets of a city paved with gold, under the shadow of trees whose leaves are for the healing of nations, beside fountains of living waters, in a land where there is no death.

THE END.

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